

# Environmental Reconstruction and EU Approximation in South Eastern Europe

REReP Highlights  
2003-2005



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY  
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



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2003-2005**

With forewords by **Stavros Dimas**,  
European Commissioner for Environment  
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Edited by  
**Yordanka Minkova**

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REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY  
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# Executive Summary

## Why this Publication?

This publication provides an overview and highlights the achievements of the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe (REReP) from 2003 to 2005.

The information presented builds upon and complements several previous REC publications, particularly the books *Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme (REReP): Building a Better Environment for the Future for South Eastern Europe* (REC, 2001)<sup>1</sup> and *Highlights of the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe* (REC, 2003),<sup>2</sup> which covered the period from 2000 to 2003. In addition, the document *Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme: Model for a Successful Assistance Mechanism*, which was prepared for the Kiev ministerial conference, describes the creation of REReP, its endorsement and its unique mechanism of implementation.

This publication serves as a showcase for REReP's achievements and its potential as an example for other countries and regions. It also serves as a public source of information on donor contributions for the environmental reconstruction of South Eastern Europe.

## Background

The Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe (REReP) was launched in 1999 following the Kosovo conflict as a participatory, flexible and transparent process to ensure that environmental protection was not overlooked in reconstruction efforts. It was launched as a regional initiative, not just in recognition that environmental problems needed regional solutions, but as an early attempt to establish contact and trust between the environmental actors from the various countries.

The ministers of environment from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Romania — observed by representatives of donor countries, international organisations, institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) — met in Skopje on March 15-16, 2000, to discuss and agree upon REReP in the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern

Europe (Working Table II). Serbia and Montenegro (then the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) joined REReP in November 2000 after its political changes.

The REReP mechanism was revised to align with the rapidly developing Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), which reflected the changing political landscape. REReP evolved into a mechanism to support countries in meeting their SAP obligation of regional cooperation. It was clearly stated that “REReP must develop into a vehicle to assist the countries of SEE in their long-term goal of integration into the structures of the European Union.”

The objectives of the programme are:

- the creation of functioning environmental institutions and the development of a sound, effectively enforced environmental legal and policy framework that approximates with that of the EU;
- strengthened civil society, in which the public has access to environmental information and participates in environmental decision making, and environmental awareness is enhanced;
- achieving measurably reduced levels of environmental pollution, with the corresponding health benefits that follow;
- minimising environmental pressures arising from economic recovery; and
- achieving genuine environmental regional cooperation on cross-border issues that meets the obligations of the SAP.

Thus the REReP process in South Eastern Europe (SEE) combined Stability Pact objectives for fostering lasting peace, prosperity and stability in the region, with the SAP objectives of harmonising the environmental policies, institutions and standards in SEE countries with those of the EU. A valuable complementary link to the EU accession process in candidate countries has been established through the participation of Bulgaria and Romania. In October 2003, in Skopje, ministers of environment from SAP countries adopted a joint statement that identified areas for regional cross-border cooperation and assistance.

REReP priority areas were re-defined in line with the restatement of programme goals concerning institu-



tion building, support to environmental civil society, regional cooperation mechanisms and cross-border projects, and reduction of environmental health threats and biodiversity loss.

Countries have begun to move along the path to eventual membership in the EU. In June 2004 Croatia became a candidate country and its Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) entered into force on February 1, 2005. In March 2004, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia applied for EU membership, and its SAA entered into force on April 1, 2004. The negotiations for an SAA with Albania began on January 31, 2003. The European Commission conducted a Feasibility Study for Bosnia and Herzegovina, identifying 16 priority reforms upon which significant progress would allow the European Commission to recommend to the European Council the opening of negotiations on an SAA. A similar feasibility study has been undertaken for Serbia and Montenegro, which participates in the SAP through the Enhanced Permanent Dialogue. Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration) participates in the SAP Tracking Mechanism (STM), which was initiated by the European Commission in spring 2003. It is designed to facilitate the territory's alignment with European structures.

As the REReP Secretariat, the REC has organised seven task force meetings since the launch of the programme. The Seventh REReP Task Force Meeting took place on September 30 – October 1, 2004 in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro under the co-chairmanship of the European Commission and the Albanian Ministry of Environment.

## External Review

An independent external review of REReP was issued in January 2004 which evaluates the results of international support, including REReP's management, content and impact, and recommends new directions for the future. This review was presented and discussed at the seventh task force meeting and, based on the review recommendations and discussions, the European Commission prepared a paper entitled, "Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme: The Way Forward," on the direction of future work within the REReP to be discussed at the next meeting in Brussels in September 2005. Interest in the REReP process by the international community remained strong in 2004. At the most recent meeting of the REReP Task Force some of the new EU member states were, following the historic enlargement, present for the first time as donors.

## Progress by Priority Area

The means used to present the projects in this publication were approved by the REReP Task Force at its

most recent meeting. The REReP Secretariat invited all stakeholders to describe the achievements of specific projects and initiatives in the region. Input was received from various implementers, including OSCE, UNDP, IUCN, NATO, and international financial institutions. The descriptions include projects prioritised at the beginning of REReP, as well as other projects and initiatives aimed at the environmental reconstruction and EU approximation of the region. All the input was compiled and described in a unified format, indicating project background and rationale, progress achieved and directions for follow-up activities.

The projects are presented in four separate chapters that mirror the four priority areas of the programme, which are:

- institution building;
- support to environmental civil society;
- support to environmental regional cooperation mechanisms and cross-border projects; and
- reducing environmental health threats and the loss of biodiversity.

Fulfillment of the SAP and accession criteria entails far-reaching reforms, principally the development of adequate institutional capacity. Since REReP's inception, **institution building** has been its highest priority. The strengthening of SEE's environmental institutions is a precondition for the successful implementation of environmental policy reforms, for drafting and enforcing environmental legislation, and for attracting environmental investment. Projects in this area cover assistance in policy development, including strategies and action plans, law drafting, capacity building and institutional development. The Priority Environmental Investment Programme for SEE (PEIP) supports national environmental investment planning in the countries through institutional strengthening and capacity building. Support for acceptance and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements has been provided to the countries to spread international environmental norms to the SEE region, and to develop a potentially significant area for interstate dialogue.

Within this priority area, REReP has also assisted countries in establishing expert networks to promote the exchange of experience among countries. The Balkan Environmental Regulatory Compliance and Enforcement Network (BERCEN) continues to provide technical assistance and facilitates the exchange of experience and information among people involved in environmental inspection, permitting and implementation of environmental laws. Due to its extended geographical scope (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey were invited to join) and new terms of reference, the new name of the network is the Environmental Compliance



and Enforcement Network for Accession (ECENA). Dialogue has been fostered through study visits, seminars, meetings, and training sessions. Assistance has also been provided for building environmental information systems that contribute to the transparency of environmental institutions and multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation. Support has been provided for developing local environmental action plans (LEAPs) in 21 selected municipalities of four Western Balkan countries, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro, as well as a Kosovar Environmental Action Plan (KEAP) for the territory of Kosovo (currently under UN interim administration).

REReP's priorities have always included **support to civil society**. This area is seen as a vital element in ensuring that investments made during reconstruction reflect broad public interest and that democratically based, institutional capacities are truly embedded. Furthermore, support to environmental civil society is seen as contributing to democratic development, national and international stability and security, and solution of environmental problems of the Balkan region.

The projects developed and implemented within the REReP context demonstrate the breadth of actions necessary for support of this sector. Financial support to NGOs has concentrated on helping them to prepare projects on sustainable development, thereby supporting environmentally responsible development. The Regional Initiatives for Sustainable Development in the Western Balkans programme assists civil society in South Eastern Europe to prepare and implement sustainable development in practice. These efforts involve various competitive granting programmes at national and regional levels to strengthen NGO capacity to carry out their own projects, thus enabling them to contribute to the sustainable development of their region at national and regional levels. Support to national and regional electronic networks has included: strategic planning exercises, targeted training and infrastructure provision. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, and Serbia and Montenegro, along with other Danube countries, have also received support through the Danube Regional Project with small grants to NGOs and enhanced access to information and public participation in environmental decision making.

The importance of strong legal structures was demonstrated through a project assisting environmental legal advisory and advocacy centres in the region. Environmental education, as a primary base for forming public knowledge and opinion, has been supported by the development of educational materials and teacher training in Albania.

The SEE environmental NGOs network has played an important role in the REReP process. Despite their

clear priority and focus on local and national problems, SEE environmental NGOs recognise that effective regional networks are a tool for regional cooperation. The transference of existing capacity can significantly contribute to the development of environmental movements, the mobilisation of needed resources and articulation of credible input in relevant international processes.

The promotion of **regional cooperation**, including **cross-border** initiatives, is at the heart of the REReP concept. It is a catalyst for establishing trust, overcoming war legacies and promoting peace. All REReP activities and projects are based on this understanding. A ministerial meeting on progress achieved within the Stabilisation and Association Process took place in October, 2003 in Skopje. Ministers of environment met to discuss the progress achieved, identify common problems in the implementation of the SAP, and to propose priorities of high interest for the region for future assistance within the SAP, which remains the driving force for environmental improvement in the region. They adopted a Joint Statement that identified areas for regional cross-border cooperation and assistance.

The number of cross-border memoranda of understanding, agreements and initiatives has rapidly increased. Senior officials have met to exchange information, views and experience on the current status of cross-border cooperation as well as to define priorities and needs. They also met to discuss and select specific cross-border project ideas for further development and implementation and presented them at the 7th Task Force Meeting. A follow-up meeting was organised in Montenegro that focused on the example of sub-regional cooperation.

Environmental cooperation is indispensable for the sustainable management of shared natural resources. It has created mutual trust and established long-term horizons while developing a habit of cooperation. This is especially valid for the protection of shared natural sites. The water management across borders of the rivers Sava, Drina, Neretva and Danube, as well as the management of joint natural resources such as Stara Planina, and Skadar, Ohrid and Prespa lakes are proven examples of successful cross-border cooperation in environmental issues. The Strategic Plan 2004-2008 concerning three cross-border sites of high conservation significance — the Neretva Delta (Ramsar site), Shkoder lake (Ramsar site) and West Stara Planina — was prepared and presented at the 6th REReP Task Force Meeting in October 2003, and action plans for 2004 and 2005 for each of the sites are currently under implementation. Assistance in capacity building to central and local governments in managing shared natural resources has been provided, and multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation has been fostered.

REReP recognises the importance of sustainable use of natural resources and conserving natural and cultural heritage to further stabilise and bring economic success to the region. After decades of authoritarian governance and violent conflicts in the region, potential **health threats** include environmental hot spots from outdated heavy industry and mining, as well as rapid changes in consumption patterns, energy and transport.

Based on the regional report on environment and security priorities in SEE and consultations with the countries themselves, the Environment and Security (EnvSec) Initiative was launched in 2003 by UNDP, UNEP, OSCE and NATO, with three priority fields of action developed: managing and reducing transboundary risks of hazardous activities; management of transboundary natural resources; and cross-cutting issues (awareness, information, education, etc.). The described ongoing projects are focused primarily on the protection of transboundary water sites such as Prespa Lake and the Tisza and Sava river basins. As the region already has a history of serious mining accidents, a Desk Assessment was developed to identify, delineate and catalogue sites related to mineral resources that pose substantial risk to the environment, public health and safety, and to regional socio-political stability in South Eastern Europe.

Assistance for conservation projects protecting **natural resources** has been provided by GEF/World Bank. As environmental action often has to take place across borders and engage the interest and commitment of civil society, it provides an opportunity for bringing communities together in a shared endeavour. IUCN, the World Conservation Union, opened a Programme Office for South Eastern Europe in Belgrade in June 2004, and the major activities implemented since then are presented.

### Donor Support for REReP

The REReP coordinating mechanism enabled some donors to begin financing projects in the region much earlier than would have otherwise been possible, and led to increased attention by international financing institutions (IFIs) to environmental investment projects in SEE. The international donor community responded by offering broad support to REReP's implementation. More than EUR 40 million was allocated for a quick-start package of urgent projects, while the overall amount exceeded EUR 600 million.<sup>3</sup>

Donor institutions and governments continually assess their support and adjust their strategies to the new situation. REReP Task Force meetings serve as indispensable guiding points in this process.

The European Commission is REReP's biggest donor (it contributed to REReP's creation and continues to cooperate with other donors). The EC provided more than EUR 5 million under PHARE/Obnova in

2000, and a follow-up project worth EUR 2 million was included in the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS) Regional Programme 2002, which started in September 2003 and will run for 36 months.

In addition to the European Commission's direct assistance, the governments of EU member states Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden have provided financing for environmental projects from the programme's inception. After the historic enlargement of May 2004, new member states made the transition from aid recipients to donors. Their Official Development Assistance (ODA) is characterised by policy frameworks, and aid practices focused on cross-cutting themes (mainly the environment and human rights) and on political stability and regional security. They focus strongly on their neighbours, where they have developed a particularly relevant expertise.<sup>4</sup> Environmental projects within REReP have been funded by the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia.

Countries outside the EU such as Japan (through the Japan Special Fund<sup>5</sup> at the REC), Norway, Switzerland, and the US have also contributed funding to REReP.

The coordination of financing among international financing institutions is well established in the region. Common strategies are in place in the infrastructure sector (transport, energy and environment) at regional and national levels, and are supported by the EC, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB). The Infrastructure Steering Group consists of experts from the European Commission, the World Bank, EBRD, the Council of Europe Development Bank, the Office of Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact and EIB. The close level of cooperation between the donors in this group — initially emphasising the transport and energy sector — is now being expanded to pay increasing attention to environmental issues.

### Endnotes

- 1 Visit: [www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REREP/rerep\\_bbe.pdf](http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REREP/rerep_bbe.pdf).
- 2 Visit: [www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REREP/HighlightsofREReP.pdf](http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REREP/HighlightsofREReP.pdf).
- 3 As reported at the 7th Task Force meeting, October 2004. The full list of environmental projects reported to the REReP Secretariat is available at [www.rec.org/REC/Databases/REReP/ProjectList\\_Kiev.pdf](http://www.rec.org/REC/Databases/REReP/ProjectList_Kiev.pdf). However, it is not exhaustive in scope and contains only information on projects submitted to the secretariat by implementing agencies and donors.
- 4 Final Report, The Consequences Of Enlargement For Development Policy, Volume I, prepared by Development Strategies, IDC, August 31, 2003. See [www.trialog.or.at/docs/consequences-of-enlargement.pdf](http://www.trialog.or.at/docs/consequences-of-enlargement.pdf).
- 5 Visit [www.rec.org/REC/Programs/jsf/](http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/jsf/).

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<b>BERCEN</b>	Balkan Environmental Regulatory Compliance and Enforcement Network
<b>BMU</b>	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>CARDS</b>	Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation
<b>CEE</b>	Central and Eastern Europe
<b>DG</b>	Directorate General
<b>DISAE</b>	Development of Implementation Strategies for Approximation in Environment
<b>EAR</b>	European Agency for Reconstruction
<b>EBRD</b>	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
<b>ECENA</b>	Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network for Accession
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EEA</b>	European Environment Agency
<b>EECCA</b>	Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia
<b>EIA</b>	Environmental impact assessment
<b>EIB</b>	European Investment Bank
<b>EIONET</b>	European Environment Information and Observation Network
<b>ELAC</b>	Environmental legal advocacy/advisory centre
<b>ELDNSO</b>	Environmental Law Drafting Network of Senior Officials in South Eastern Europe
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>GMOs</b>	Genetically modified organisms
<b>GTZ</b>	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
<b>ICPDR</b>	International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
<b>IEB</b>	European Investment Bank
<b>IFIs</b>	International financing institutions
<b>IMPEL</b>	European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law
<b>INECE</b>	International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement
<b>IPPC</b>	Integrated pollution prevention and control
<b>ISG</b>	Infrastructure Steering Group
<b>IUCN</b>	World Conservation Union
<b>LEAP</b>	Local environmental action plan
<b>MEAs</b>	Multilateral environmental agreements
<b>MIP</b>	Multi-annual Indicative Programme
<b>NEAP</b>	National environmental action plan
<b>NFP</b>	National focal point

## TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>NGOs</b>	Non-governmental organisations
<b>NIS</b>	Newly Independent States
<b>NISECEN</b>	NIS Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for European Co-operation and Development
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>PEIP</b>	Priority Environmental Investment Programme for South Eastern Europe
<b>PRTR</b>	Pollution release and transfer register
<b>REC</b>	Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe
<b>REReP</b>	Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe
<b>REReP TF</b>	Task Force for the Implementation of REReP
<b>RMCEI</b>	Recommendations for minimum criteria for environmental inspections
<b>SAP</b>	Stabilisation and Association Process
<b>SAA</b>	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
<b>SEA</b>	Strategic environmental assessment
<b>SEE</b>	South Eastern Europe
<b>SEEENN</b>	South Eastern European Environmental NGO Network
<b>TAIEX</b>	Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office
<b>UNECE</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
<b>USEPA</b>	United States Environmental Protection Agency
<b>WB</b>	World Bank



# Foreword from the European Commissioner for Environment

In South East Europe no country can act alone on environmental issues. Each country has to work with its neighbours.

Creating the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme (REReP) in 2000 was a strong signal that the countries of South East Europe wished to provide regional solutions to regional environmental problems.

Since its inception, REReP has become one of the major vehicles for addressing environmental concerns and assistance needs within the Stabilisation and Association Process, which aims at promoting development and reform through alignment with the norms and standards of the European Union. The European Commission assisted in the launch of this initiative and remains a driving force behind it.

REReP has helped to establish a variety of initiatives by giving support in four priority areas: institution

building, environmental NGOs, regional and cross-border cooperation, and reducing environmental health threats and the loss of biodiversity.

REReP has shown itself to be a useful tool for addressing the environmental problems affecting the citizens of this part of our European continent. But although a lot has been achieved, the challenge to provide EU-level environmental standards for all people in South East Europe remains.

I welcome this publication as a vehicle for reporting and highlighting the achievements of REReP in the period 2003-2005.

**Stavros Dimas**  
Commissioner  
Brussels  
June 2005



## Foreword from the Minister of Environment of Albania

The Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe (REReP) has proved to be a flexible mechanism for mobilising significant international support, and for enabling countries to advance reforms in environmental policy and legislation. This progress has come about by strengthening institutions, building civil society, and addressing war damage in a coordinated and transparent manner.

In September 2001, REReP reviewed the mechanism for strengthening its link to the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) for South Eastern Europe. Since then, REReP has become a vehicle not only for regional cooperation and dialogue in South Eastern Europe (SEE), but for assisting countries with their long-term goals of integrating themselves into EU structures.

We applaud the efforts of all the SEE countries for taking and maintaining ownership of this process with an enthusiasm and dedication that has rapidly transformed REReP into a successful assistance mechanism and high-quality model to follow in the future. We also welcome the efforts of all REReP stakeholders, including the European Commission, international organisa-

tions, project implementing agencies and non-governmental organisations.

We thank the donor community for their strong commitment to environmental reconstruction of the SEE region, and for providing impressive programme support. Long-lasting donor cooperation may now be considered another aspect of REReP's success story. However, it is important to remember that there is still a great need for environmental assistance in the region within REReP's four priority areas.

Regional and cross-border cooperation is essential, and REReP beneficiary countries remain firmly committed to open dialogue and the exchange of experiences. Active participation in national leadership and project implementation will also help to bring about peaceful and sustainable regional development.

**Prof. Et'hem Ruka**

Minister of Environment of Albania

Tirana

May 2005



# Introduction

This publication provides an overview and highlights the achievements of the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe (REReP) from 2003 to 2005.

The information presented builds upon and complements several previous REC publications, particularly the books *Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme (REReP): Building a Better Environment for the Future for South Eastern Europe* (REC, 2001)<sup>2</sup> and *Highlights of the Regional Environmental Programme for South Eastern Europe* (REC, 2003),<sup>3</sup> which covered the period from 2000 to 2003. In addition, the document titled *Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme: Model for a Successful Assistance Mechanism*, which was prepared for the Kiev ministerial conference, describes the creation of REReP, its endorsement and its unique mechanism of implementation.

The bulk of this publication is presented in five major sections. The first part gives a regional overview that includes the political and historical background of the project. It also describes recent developments within the REReP programme and outlines its future direction. Special attention is given to the coordination of donor assistance.

The overview is followed by summaries of selected projects implemented within the period. The presentation of projects in the publication was approved by the Task Force at the last REReP TF meeting. As a first step, a REReP Statistics Pack was presented to facilitate the

exchange of project information. Second, the REReP Secretariat invited all the stakeholders to describe the achievements of specific projects and initiatives in the region. Input was received from various implementers, including the REC, OSCE, UNDP, IUCN and NATO. The descriptions include projects prioritised at the beginning of REReP, as well as other projects and initiatives aimed at the environmental reconstruction of the region. All the input was compiled and described in a unified format, indicating the project's background and rationale, progress achieved and directions for follow-up activities.

The projects are presented in four separate chapters that mirror the four priority areas of the programme, which are:

- institution building;
- support to environmental civil society;
- support to environmental regional cooperation mechanisms and cross-border projects; and
- reducing environmental health threats and the loss of biodiversity.

This publication serves as an information showcase for REReP's achievements and its potential as an example for other countries and regions. It also serves as a public source of information on donor contributions for the environmental reconstruction of South Eastern Europe.







## History of REReP





# History of REReP

In the last decade, one of the biggest environmental challenges in Central and Eastern Europe was found in the Balkans, where military conflict and political instability wreaked havoc on mankind and nature alike. The Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe (REReP) was launched in 1999 following the Kosovo conflict as a participatory, flexible and transparent process to ensure that environmental protection was not overlooked in reconstruction efforts. It was launched as a regional initiative, not just in recognition that environmental problems needed regional solutions, but as an early attempt to establish contact and trust between the environmental actors from the various countries.

The ministers of environment from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Romania — observed by representatives of donor countries, international organisations, institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) — met in Skopje on March 15-16, 2000, to discuss and agree upon REReP in the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe<sup>4</sup> (Working Table II). Serbia and Montenegro (then the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) joined REReP in November 2000 after its political changes.

In a Joint Statement, the ministers endorsed REReP and agreed on a List of Immediate Project Priorities for the Implementation of REReP as part of the Stability Pact's "Quick Start" package of projects. The ministers also approved the Terms of Reference of the Task Force for Implementation of the REReP (REReP TF) and asked the REC to act as secretariat.

Since the first meeting of the REReP Task Force in July 2000, the Task Force has met seven times to review the progress of the programme, provide guidance and take decisions on REReP's implementation. The activities during the first years were characterised by pioneering work in collecting and processing information, clarifying needs, establishing networks, mobilising environmental stakeholders and developing strategies and action plans.

The REReP mechanism was revised to align with the rapidly developing Stabilisation and Association Process, which reflected the changing political landscape. REReP evolved into a mechanism to support

countries in meeting their SAP obligation of regional cooperation. It was clearly stated that "REReP must develop into a vehicle to assist SEE countries in their long-term goal of integration into the structures of the European Union."

The objectives of the programme are:

- the creation of functioning environmental institutions and the development of a sound, effectively enforced environmental legal and policy framework, which approximates with that of the EU;
- strengthened civil society, in which the public has access to environmental information and participates in environmental decision making, and environmental awareness is enhanced;
- achieving measurably reduced levels of environmental pollution, with the corresponding health benefits that follow;
- minimising environmental pressures arising from economic recovery; and
- achieving genuine environmental regional cooperation on cross-border issues that meets the obligations of the SAP.

Thus the REReP process in South Eastern Europe combined SAP objectives for fostering lasting peace, prosperity and stability in the region, with the SAP objectives of harmonising the environmental policies, institutions and standards in SEE countries with those of the EU. A valuable complementary link to the EU accession process in candidate countries has been established through the participation of Bulgaria and Romania.

A ministerial meeting on progress achieved within the Stabilisation and Association Process took place on October 15, 2003 in Skopje. Ministers of environment met to discuss the progress achieved, identify common problems in SAP implementation, and to propose priorities of high interest for the region for future assistance within the SAP, which remains the driving force for environmental improvement in the region. They adopted a Joint Statement<sup>1</sup> that identified areas for regional cross-border cooperation and assistance.

The Meeting of Senior Officials on Cross Border Cooperation from Stabilisation and Association Process Countries took place in Belgrade on May 20-21, 2004 to

implement the joint statement and the decisions of the sixth REREP TF meeting of 2003 to enhance cross-border cooperation. It was also in line with recommendations made by the External Review report on REREP, issued in January 2004. Senior officials discussed the current status and needs for cross-border cooperation in South Eastern Europe. They also presented the existing and planned cross-border initiatives and projects, reported on their progress, identified obstacles and listed fields where assistance is needed.

The senior officials asked the REREP Secretariat to organise and facilitate a follow-up meeting to present and agree upon specific cross-border project ideas. The meeting was held in Belgrade on September 28-29, 2004, a day before the seventh meeting of the REREP Task Force. Senior officials from Bulgaria and Romania were also invited to take part. The conclusions and outcomes of both meetings, including the selection of project ideas, were presented at the seventh REREP Task Force meeting.

Interest in the REREP process by the international community has remained strong in recent years. At the latest meeting of the REREP Task Force, some of the new member states were present for the first time after the historic enlargement of the European Union. Making the transition from recipients of aid to donors, they are keen to share their particularly relevant expertise with their neighbours.

## Recent Developments

### Political Context

At the Thessaloniki Summit in June 2003, the European Union sent a strong message that it is committed to the Western Balkans as a long-term investment in peace, stability, democracy and economic development. The EU underlined once again the prospect of

EU membership and pledged full support to the endeavours of the countries of South Eastern Europe by enriching the SAP with support structures inspired by the enlargement work with the accession countries. At the same time, the countries of the region, aware that there is much hard work ahead and that their European future lies primarily in their own hands, committed themselves to quickening the pace of necessary reforms.

Regional cooperation is an essential element of the SAP, and the capacity and readiness of an individual Western Balkan country to fully and constructively engage in regional cooperation is a key indicator of its ability to cope with European obligations and to eventually join the European Union. The Thessaloniki Agenda set down a number of areas in which regional cooperation should continue to be developed.

The SAP was enriched with elements that had been developed in the accession process to the EU. Annual reports now assess the political and economic situation and monitor the implementation of reforms, as well as the development of cooperation within the region. The European partnerships adopted in 2004 set the reform agenda for the countries of the region and indicate the main priority areas in which concrete steps need to be taken within the context of regional cooperation.

Countries have begun to move along the path to eventual EU membership. In June 2004, Croatia became a candidate country, and its Stabilisation and Association Agreement entered into force on February 1, 2005. In March 2004, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia applied for EU membership, and its SAA entered into force on April 1, 2004. The negotiations for an SAA with Albania began on January 31, 2003. The European Commission conducted a feasibility study for Bosnia and Herzegovina, identifying 16 priority reforms upon which significant progress would allow the Commission to recommend to the Council

#### STABILISATION AND ASSOCIATION AGREEMENTS

Key building blocks of the SAP for the Western Balkans, the stabilisation and association agreements define the framework of regional cooperation, the corresponding principles applying to all the countries of the region, and makes explicit reference to Community assistance.

**Article 1** of the SAA states that one of the aims of this association is “to foster regional co-operation in all the fields covered by this Agreement.”

**Article 4** stipulates that the signatory country of the Western Balkans “commits itself to enter into co-operation and good neighbourly relations with the other countries of the region . . . This commitment constitutes a key factor in the development of the relations and co-operation between the Parties and thus contributes to regional stability.”

**Article 11** specifies that “the Community will also support projects having a regional or cross border dimension through its technical assistance programmes.”

**Article 103** stipulates that the parties “shall develop and strengthen their cooperation in the vital task of combating environmental degradation, with the view to supporting environmental sustainability.”

## KEY DATES IN THE PROCESS

<b>March 2000</b>	Ministers of environment from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Romania endorse REReP within the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.
<b>November 2000</b>	The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia joins REReP
<b>July 2000</b>	The first TF meeting is held in Cavtat, Croatia. The Task Force decides to include Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration under UN Security Council Resolution 1244) and Montenegro in the programme in line with other Stability Pact activities.
<b>November 2000</b>	The second TF meeting is held in Brussels. The Task Force decides to include the European Investment Bank and similar financial institutions in future TF meetings. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is incorporated as a full member.
<b>September 2001</b>	The third TF meeting is held in Sarajevo. The REReP mechanism is reviewed and adjusted to ensure a link between environmental reconstruction and the Stabilisation and Association Process in South Eastern Europe.
<b>April 2002</b>	The fourth TF meeting is held in Brussels. A decision is taken for REReP to be presented at the forthcoming Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Kiev.
<b>January 2003</b>	The fifth TF meeting is held in Tirana, Albania. A discussion paper on the future directions of REReP and its links to the SAP is presented.
<b>May 2003</b>	REReP is presented at the Kiev ministerial conference.
<b>November 2003</b>	The sixth TF meeting is held in Brussels. A decision is taken that REReP needs to increase focus on regional cooperation, as well as on broader political issues and development.
<b>January 2004</b>	An independent external review of REReP is issued.
<b>September 2004</b>	The seventh TF meeting is held in Belgrade. The independent external REReP review is discussed, with recommendations for future work.

## EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIPS

The European Commission proposes “European partnerships” for the countries of the Western Balkans. Once approved by the European Council, the partnerships provide strategic guidance regarding EC support to the countries. The Council Regulation on the Establishment of the European Partnerships specifies that they “identify priorities for action in order to support [the countries’] efforts to move closer to the European Union,” and that they are adapted “to the specificities of the Stabilisation and Association process, including regional cooperation.”

Furthermore, they “are needed in order to assist the Western Balkan countries in preparing for membership within a coherent framework.” It is also specified that “it would be appropriate for Community assistance to focus on the challenges countries... defined within the framework of the European Partnerships.”

At the sectoral level, strategic guidance is already provided in the sector of regional infrastructure (transport, energy and environment) and this will continue.

the opening of negotiations on an SAA. A similar feasibility study has been undertaken for Serbia and Montenegro, which participates in the SAP through the Enhanced Permanent Dialogue. Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration) participates in the SAP through the SAP Tracking Mechanism (STM) initiated by the European Commission in spring 2003. It is designed to facilitate Kosovo’s alignment with European structures.

## REReP Independent External Review

An independent external review of REReP was carried out for the European Commission four years after REReP’s establishment in 2000.<sup>2</sup> The review evaluates the results of international support, including REReP’s management, content and impact, and recommends new directions for the future in order to enable the programme to continue to play a useful role.

The review report states that REReP's most significant impact to date has been the process of reconciliation and cooperation (in some cases for the first time) that has been launched among the environmental officials from countries that had recently been in conflict. The programme has also helped to rebuild the environmental management structures of the region, re-establish former lines of communication, and initiate formal and informal regional coordination mechanisms among the environmental NGOs in the region.

In evaluating the REC's role as REReP Secretariat, the review concluded that it is "considered appropriate and necessary, and the strong coordination that [the REC] has provided is appreciated throughout the region." The report adds that "the strong local base provided by the REC Country Offices has been especially valuable."

The report pointed out that "today it is possible to consider the medium and long term tasks ahead, including drawing closer to the European Union. One of the principal conditions of the Stabilisation and Association Process is to promote regional co-operation and dialogue, which the REReP is primed to do. It is therefore recommended that the EU continue to play a leading role in this important regional initiative."

The review provides four major recommendations for REReP's future activities:

- A shift should be made to regionalised capacity building linked to SAAs.
- REReP should be a platform for coordinating support for issues where a long-term regional approach is needed.
- REReP activities concerning priority environmental investments should be redirected toward building more realistic self-help approaches for securing needed funds.

- Small grants funding should be continued for environmental civil society.

The review gives specific recommendations to the European Commission for programming future support to the programme in the four priority areas.

## Task Force and Secretariat

The REReP Task Force consists of representatives from the environmental ministries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, the State Union Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo (territory currently under interim UN administration), and observed by representatives of donor countries, international organisations, institutions and NGOs.<sup>3</sup> The task force, which was established upon endorsement of the programme, has made essential contributions to the success of REReP by providing regular country reports on the progress achieved, discussing existing problems and offering continuous guidance for the continuation of activities.

As decided at the ministerial meeting in Skopje in 2000, which established the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe, the REC was appointed to serve as the secretariat<sup>4</sup> of the programme's task force. Responsibilities of the secretariat include facilitating donor communication between all REReP stakeholders — especially through the preparation and organisation of task force meetings — and disseminating information on REReP's implementation. This dissemination takes place directly via electronic means by the secretariat and through the Balkan Information Service. Using these tools, the secretariat assists in coordinating donor support and in assessing REReP priorities.

### REREP STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

- The countries of the region: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, and Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration)
- European Union member states and the European Commission
- Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe
- European Environment Agency and European Agency for Reconstruction
- Other donor countries: Norway, Switzerland, United States, Japan
- International organisations: United Nations Environment Programme, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, World Conservation Union, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
- Non-governmental organisations
- International financial institutions: World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Investment Bank, Council of Europe Development Bank



A total amount of EUR 922,000 has been provided for the functioning of the REReP Secretariat since its inception (EUR 646,000 from the EU, EUR 136,000 from the Netherlands, EUR 90,000 from Italy and EUR 50,000 from Germany).

The Task Force is REReP's decision-making body. The Secretariat implements these decisions and, between Task Force meetings, assists countries in the preparation of new projects and fundraising. It also acts as an implementing agency for specific projects. While monitoring the progress of REReP implementation, the Secretariat is in continuous contact with Task Force members, donors and implementing agencies. The REReP Task Force operates in a spirit of partnership, involving coherent and complementary efforts from each stakeholder while making the best use of resources.

Since the beginning of REReP's implementation, the Secretariat has organised seven regional Task Force meetings and has implemented the meetings' decisions. The secretariat also monitors project implementation and presents monitoring results at each Task Force meeting.

The shift in responsibility for reporting the progress achieved from implementing agencies to the countries represented at the Task Force meetings has resulted in a broader acknowledgement of REReP's results, and has added to the responsibilities of those countries towards the national and international environmental community. For this reason, and because of the identification of programme goals, SEE countries have effectively become the owners of REReP priority programmes. The Secretariat provides information about bilateral and multilateral assistance in the region in order to avoid duplicating its efforts, as well as to ensure that synergy results from the projects by maintaining the electronic REReP project database and its Internet website.<sup>5</sup>

## Donor Support Mechanism

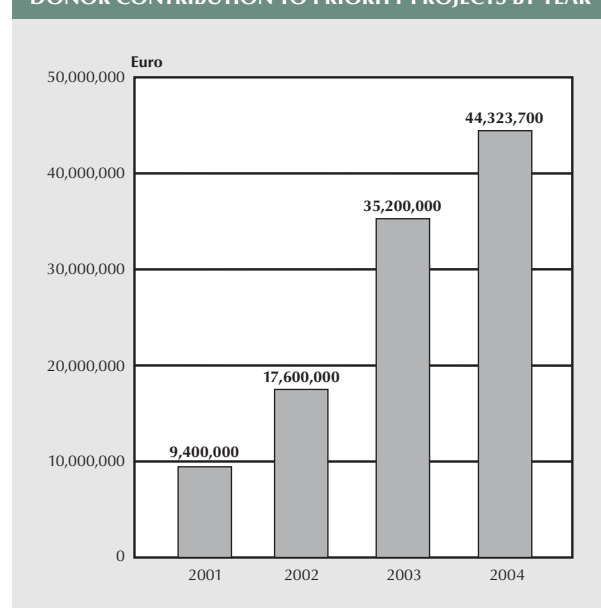
"The REReP succeeded in bringing in speedy funding for rebuilding environmental management capacity in the Western Balkans," according to the external review of REReP for the European Commission. The REReP coordinating mechanism enabled some donors to begin financing projects in the region much earlier than would have otherwise been possible, and led to increased attention by international financing institutions (IFIs) to environmental investment projects in SEE, the report concluded. The international donor community responded by offering broad support to REReP's implementation. More than EUR 40 million was allocated for a quick-start package of urgent projects, while the overall amount exceeded EUR 600 million.<sup>6</sup>

In recent years the Balkan region has been regarded by the international community as a grouping of countries that share a common legacy of ethnic violence and economic neglect. Some countries, however, have progressed much faster than others in terms of political, economic and environmental reform. The level of reform primarily dictates a country's absorption capacity for new projects and external financing in all sectors, including environment. Donor institutions and governments continually assess their support and adjust their strategies to the new situation. REReP Task Force meetings serve as indispensable reference points in this process.

The European Commission is REReP's biggest donor, contributing to its creation and continuation in cooperation with other donors. The EC provided more than EUR 5 million under PHARE/Obnova in 2000, and a follow-up project worth EUR 2 million was included in the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS) Regional Programme 2002, which began its 36-month run in September 2003.

The CARDS programme brings a strategic approach to providing assistance to countries in the region and provides some EUR 4.65 billion in the period 2000-2006. Under the umbrella of the CARDS programme, the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) is responsible for the management of the main EC assistance programmes in Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. A recent evaluation found that CARDS assistance made a significant contribution to reconstruction in the Western Balkans, and that it remains relevant in the context of the goals of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

DONOR CONTRIBUTION TO PRIORITY PROJECTS BY YEAR



In addition to CARDS, the European Commission will now provide enhanced support for institution building through twinning and the Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office (TAIEX). Framework agreements will allow the participation of SEE countries in Community programmes. Moreover, CARDS assistance underpins the activities of the European Environment Agency. The Danube/Black Sea Initiative (DABLAS) has been supported by a Danube Regional Investment Support Facility (2002, EUR 4 million, underway) and the Sava River Basin initiative will benefit from a Sava River Management Plan (2003, EUR 2.3 million, expected to start at the end of 2004). Both initiatives are pursued in reference to the commitment taken by non-EU members of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) (of which Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro) to implement the EU Water Framework Directive. Two other project preparation facilities received CARDS support: the Municipal Finance Facility (2002, EUR 1.7 million, underway) and Environment Project Preparation Facility (2003, EUR 1.8 million, under preparation).

In addition to the Commission's direct assistance, the governments of EU member states Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden have provided financing for environmental projects since the programme's inception. After the historic enlargement of May 2004 the new member states made the transition from aid recipients to donors. Their Official Development Assistance (ODA) is characterised by policy frameworks and aid practices focused on cross-cutting themes (mainly the environment and human rights) and on political stability and regional security. They focus strongly on their neighbours where they have developed a particularly relevant expertise.<sup>7</sup> Environmental projects within REReP have been funded by the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia.

Countries outside the EU such as Japan (through the Japan Special Fund<sup>8</sup> at the REC), Norway, Switzerland, and the US have also contributed funding to REReP.

The coordination of financing among international financing institutions is well established in the region. Common strategies are in place in the infrastructure sector (transport, energy and environment) at regional and national levels, supported by the EC, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB). The Infrastructure Steering Group (ISG) consists of experts from the European Commission, the World Bank, the EBRD, the Council of Europe Development Bank, the Office of Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact and the EIB. The close level of cooperation between the donors in this group, initially emphasising

the transport and energy sector, is now being expanded to pay increasing attention to environmental issues.

All projects financed by the EBRD<sup>9</sup> are designed to be environmentally friendly. Projects with specific environmental aims include energy efficiency credit lines and wastewater treatment facilities. There are also projects where environmental benefits are incidental as a result of, for example, technology upgrades which improve environmental efficiency. To improve availability of and access to local environmental expertise in its countries of operations, the EBRD offers training opportunities closely linked to its project financing. Although the focus of the EBRD's environmental training is on improving professional expertise related to its projects, institution-building efforts also prompt training in selected policy areas. The Bank's work involves environmental impact assessment; harmonisation of environmental standards and legislation; environmental liability; and public consultation.

In the environmental sector, the EIB<sup>10</sup> follows existing regional initiatives. The EIB applies the highest environmental standards — those established by the European Union. Its approach to environmental issues is proactive, both in financing environmental projects and how it manages its lending. The EIB carefully assesses the environmental impact of all other projects it finances, ensuring that the necessary mitigating measures are in place. The main issues addressed by the EIB are: tackling climate change (e.g. energy efficiency and renewable energy, protecting nature and other natural resources), reducing the impact of the environment on human health (e.g. the supply of safe drinking water and wastewater treatment, and improvements to air quality) and promoting the quality of life in the urban environment (e.g. urban transport and urban renewal). Parallel to its strategy for the SAP countries, the EIB will increasingly address the needs of the municipal sector. This effort will require the development of municipal borrowing and programme lending capabilities, representing a considerable challenge and necessitating new structural approaches to this area of financing on a country-by-country basis.

The broad objectives of the World Bank's environment program in the Balkans has three pillars: integration of environment into sustainable, private-sector-led growth; supporting improved environmental governance as part of broader public sector management; and helping countries prepare for the challenges of meeting the EU environmental *acquis*. Within these pillars, "thematic" areas of focus have been improved management of shared waters (rivers, lakes and marine), improved natural resource management, improved water, wastewater and solid waste management; biodiversity conservation; energy efficiency; and environmental institution development. The World Bank's programme is multi-

faceted and includes analytic work to support dialogue on government reforms; sector loans, guarantees, and credits; and facilitation of access to multilateral environmental grant programmes such as the Global Environment Facility and bilateral support through dedicated facilities such as the Bank Netherlands Partnership Programme. World Bank programmes are agreed with the Ministries of Finance, and are typically administered by client countries through line ministries, or through NGOs and community-based organisations. Most projects include specific capacity-building efforts focused on sustainability of actions and investments.

## Endnotes

- 1 See the annex to this chapter.
- 2 The Carl Bro Global Environmental Consortium performed RReP's external review.
- 3 For a list of the current members of the RReP Task Force, visit: [www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REREP/RerepTaskForce.html](http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REREP/RerepTaskForce.html).
- 4 The secretariat homepage can be found at [www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REREP/Default.html](http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REREP/Default.html).
- 5 Visit the RReP project database at: [www.rec.org/REC/Databases/REREP/Default.html](http://www.rec.org/REC/Databases/REREP/Default.html).
- 6 As reported at the seventh Task Force meeting, October 2004. The full list of environmental projects reported to the RReP Secretariat is available at [www.rec.org/REC/Databases/REREP/ProjectList\\_Kiev.pdf](http://www.rec.org/REC/Databases/REREP/ProjectList_Kiev.pdf). However, it is not exhaustive in scope and contains only information on projects submitted to the Secretariat by implementing agencies and donors.
- 7 Final Report, The Consequences Of Enlargement For Development Policy, Volume I, prepared by Development Strategies, IDC, August 31, 2003. See [www.trialog.or.at/docs/consequences-of-enlargement.pdf](http://www.trialog.or.at/docs/consequences-of-enlargement.pdf).
- 8 Visit [www.rec.org/REC/Programs/jsf/](http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/jsf/).
- 9 Visit [www.ebrd.com/enviro/index.htm](http://www.ebrd.com/enviro/index.htm).
- 10 View the EIB Environmental Statement 2004 at [www.eib.org/Attachments/strategies/environmental\\_statement\\_en.pdf](http://www.eib.org/Attachments/strategies/environmental_statement_en.pdf).



## Joint Statement

by the Ministers of Environment and Heads of Delegations of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro on the achieved progress within the Stabilisation and Association Process

*October 15, 2003 Skopje, FYR Macedonia*

The Ministers of Environment and the Heads of Delegations of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro met in Skopje, FYR Macedonia to discuss the achieved progress, identify common problems in the implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) and propose priorities of high interest for the region for future assistance within the SAP, which is the main driving force for environmental improvement in the region.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations welcomed the meeting as a major opportunity for exchange of information, views and experience within the SAP, and for development of a common approach to environmental challenges. The Ministers and Heads of Delegations agreed to use similar exchanges in the future to continue the established dialogue and cooperation within SAP and to foster regional cooperation on priority environmental issues. It is the belief of the Ministers and Heads of Delegations that SAP could benefit from exchange of the accumulated positive experience, strengthened regional dialogue and from a regional approach to tackling common environmental problems.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations expressed their commitment to the Declaration of the EU-Western Balkans Summit held in Thessaloniki on June 19-21, 2003. More specifically, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations recalled that “The SAP will remain the framework for the European course of the Western Balkan countries, all the way to their future accession”. They also welcomed “the decisions by the EU to strengthen its Stabilisation and Association policy towards the region and to enrich it with elements from the experience of enlargement”. The Ministers and Heads of Del-

egations emphasised the role of the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme (REReP) as a successful assistance mechanism supporting the SAP.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations presented the main developments, achievements, constraints and issues within the SAP. Despite the economic hardship and limited resources available the SAP countries strived for keeping the environment high on the political agenda. Major results were achieved in environmental policy and legal reform, development of national strategies and action plans, institutional strengthening, civil society building, access to information and public participation, and regional and cross-border cooperation. The Ministers and Heads of Delegations expressed their appreciation for the donor assistance received within the SAP and REReP, which played important roles in the protection of the environment. They expressed their gratitude to the European Commission, donor countries and international organisations and institutions for the support provided so far for the environmental improvement of the region.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations emphasised the established very good cooperation with the European Environmental Agency (EEA) and expressed their wish to become as soon as possible EEA members as stated in the joint application signed in Zadar, Croatia, June 2003. The countries need assistance from the EEA in the development of their environmental monitoring and early warning systems.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations referred to Article 23 of the Declaration adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, calling for regional cooperation to promote sustainable development. In this respect the need for environmental cohesion in the Western Balkan/SAP countries was proposed and accepted. The importance of keeping together the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development was emphasised. The text of a declaration on the environmental cohesion in the Western Balkan/SAP countries could be drafted by a working group established by the countries and be proposed to be adopted by the Ministers of Environment of the SAP countries. The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) should assist this working group.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations confirmed their readiness and ambition to reach the environmental standards of the European Union, recognising that natural resources and the environment are important capital and represent economic categories.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations recognised that the countries are at a more advanced stage of the SAP and would like to focus more on implementation issues. They are willing to play a more active role in defining priority areas for assistance. The following areas for regional, cross-border cooperation and assistance have been discussed:

- process of approximation of legislation and of strengthening of the environmental institutions, including local authorities;
- joint work on environmental enforcement and compliance, particularly implementation of the IPPC and Seveso II Directives;
- efforts for promoting the implementation of the EIA/SEA EU Directives, including EIA in a transboundary context (Espoo Convention);
- preparatory activities for implementation of heavy investment directives;
- sustainable and integrated management of water resources based on the EU Water Framework Directive and related directives;
- preparatory activities for the Framework Directive on Waste and related directives;
- efforts for strengthening the civil society and for implementation of the principles of the Aarhus Convention, as reflected in the relevant directives;
- development and introduction of economic instruments;
- establishing a common market for environmentally friendly technologies, renewable energy and cleaner technologies, introducing EMAS and ISO 14000;
- environmental education;
- protection of biological and landscape diversity, including promotion of sustainable tourism, and
- integration of environmental concerns into other sectors, e.g. sustainable transport and agriculture, including addressing adequately environmental health issues.

Ministers and Heads of Delegations stressed the importance of defining clear priorities of high interest to the region aiming to focus on few priorities, corresponding to the absorption capacities of the countries. More specifically, assistance is needed to address primarily the following priority concerns of regional and cross-border value:

- the CARDS Programme has been recognised as a very important mechanism for technical assistance. However, more environmental investment projects have to be attracted to the region and respective additional programmes are needed, as was the case with the EU candidate countries;
- strengthening of international and regional cooperation through twinning programmes in order to exchange experiences, know how and best available practice between SAP countries and the current and new EU member states as well as between the countries in the region;
- rehabilitation of the environmental hot spots identified by the countries within the Priority Environmental Investment Programme and other documents;
- waste water management, especially in the shared water bodies (rivers, lakes, seas);
- municipal and hazardous waste management, including their transboundary movement;
- further capacity building on national and local level.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations agreed on future steps for enhancing the implementation of REReP as one of the major vehicles for addressing their environmental concerns and assistance needs within SAP. REReP projects have been very useful to the countries so far and have to be continued in the future, for example the project on strengthening national environmental protection agencies and their inspectorates; the BERCEN network creates opportunities for participation in IMPEL projects and activities.

The SAP countries are committed to use to a greater extent the experience and expertise gathered by the new EU member states, transfer of best practices and lessons learned should continue in the future.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations called upon the European Commission, donor countries, international organisations and institutions to mobilise additional resources for assisting the successful implementation of the environmental obligations within the SAP following the pattern established for the new EU member states.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations expressed support to the candidature of Serbia and Montenegro to host the Sixth “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations expressed their gratitude to the Regional Environmental Center for its continuous assistance and support to the SAP countries. The REC should facilitate the implementation of this Joint Statement and the necessary follow up steps.

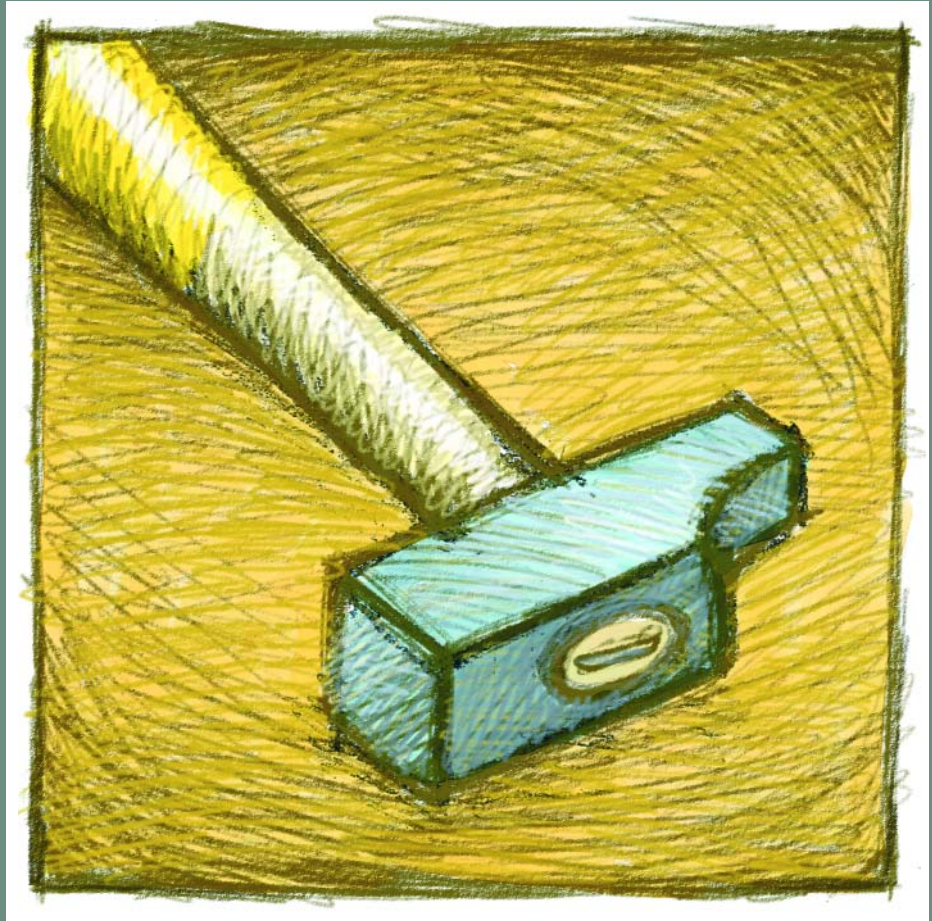
The Ministers and Heads of Delegations requested the Minister of Environment and Physical Planning of FYR Macedonia to present this Joint Statement at the forthcoming 6th REReP Task Force meeting to take



place on November 7, 2003 in Brussels as well as to make it available to all stakeholders.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations congratulated the host, Minister of Environment and Physical Planning of FYR Macedonia Ljubomir Janev, on his leadership in bringing together the Ministers of the region and thanked the Government of Macedonia for organising this meeting.





## Institution Building



# Institution Building

Fulfilment of the obligations of the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) and accession criteria<sup>1</sup> entails far-reaching reforms: principally the development of adequate institutional capacity. Since REReP's inception, institution building has been identified as its area of highest priority. The strengthening of environmental institutions in South Eastern Europe (SEE) is a precondition for successfully implementing environmental policy reforms, for drafting and enforcing environmental legislation, and for attracting environmental investment. Projects in this area cover assistance in policy development — including strategies and action plans, law drafting, capacity building and institutional development. Support for acceptance and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements has been provided to the countries to spread international environmental norms to the SEE region, and to develop a potentially significant area for interstate dialogue.

Within this priority area, REReP has also assisted countries in establishing expert networks to promote the exchange of experience among countries. Dialogue has been fostered through study visits, seminars, meetings, and training sessions. Assistance has also been provided for building environmental information systems that contribute to the transparency of environmental institutions, multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation. Support has been provided for the development of local environmental action plans (LEAPS) to 21 selected municipalities in four countries of Western Balkans, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro and a Kosovar Environmental Action Plan (KEAP) for the territory of Kosovo (currently under UN interim administration).

The transfer of best practices and lessons learned from EU accession countries has been a basic principle in nearly all the projects. Efforts have been made to draw, as much as possible, from the experiences of Bulgaria and Romania as accession countries.

## Assistance in the Further Development and Implementation of the SEE Priority Environmental Investment Programme (A continuation of the Development of the Priority Environmental Investment Programme for SEE project, REReP 1.2)

**Donor:** European Commission

**Amount:** EUR 250,000 (first phase), EUR 375,000 (second phase)

**Duration:** 2001-2003 (first phase), 2004-2005 (second phase)

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration)

## Project Background

The Priority Environmental Investment Programme (PEIP) for SEE is a regional, institution-strengthening and capacity-building tool that supports national environmental investment planning in the countries covered by the SAP. It also provides background information to the donor community and international financing institutions, outlining a regional perspective of investment planning in South Eastern Europe.

The PEIP is a “living” document based on a long-term process of upgrading and updating regional environmental priorities and investment projects ideas, as well as developing new investment projects. It is the only regional project that covers environmental investment projects, capacity building and institutional strengthening for all SAP countries simultaneously.

The PEIP supports national environmental investment planning in SEE through institutional strengthening and capacity building. The work covers the air, water, and waste sectors, which represent the priority environmental heavy-investment needs in the region. The PEIP also provides valuable information to the donor community and international financing institutions (IFIs), including background information on environmental and institutional needs and priorities, the status of environmental investment planning in the region, and a pipeline of priority environmental infrastructure projects in a strategic framework.

The PEIP represents the SEE countries' first steps toward the development of investment plans, programmes and projects designed to meet the needs of the EU accession process, and to raise the profile of environmental infrastructure needs among investment priorities in the countries.

### Achievements and Progress

The primary success of the first phase of the project was the development of the Priority Environmental Investment Programme for South Eastern Europe, which contains a set of regional environmental priorities and a list of priority investment projects.

The set of regional environmental priorities consists of three parts: priority sectors from a regional perspective, a list of environmental hot spots and a list of national priorities. The environmental sectors were chosen according to their regional significance, with the priority tasks being the reduction of sulphur-dioxide emissions, municipal-waste generation and treatment, and sewage treatment. The list of hot spots contains 144 locations with multiple environmental priority problems. Maps were drawn to illustrate the geographical positions of the hot spots. The set of national environmental priorities surveys the SEE countries' policy responses and their relation to the regional environmental priority sectors and hot spots.

The other half of the PEIP was the list of priority environmental investment projects. A prioritisation process was employed to compose the list, which indicated 79 high-priority projects from a regional perspective. The projects are located in Albania (4), Bosnia and Herzegovina (6), Croatia (10), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (31), Montenegro (7), Serbia (16) and Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration) (6).

All outcomes of the first phase of the PEIP were approved by the ministries of environment of the SEE countries at the Regional Meeting for High Officials, which was held in the city of Ohrid in June 2003.

The set of regional environmental priorities and the list of priority projects have been compiled for the first time ever on a regional level for South Eastern Europe. The compilation was based on a unified methodology and enlisted active stakeholder participation. This regional approach is especially important when looking at the contributions of the SEE region to European environmental pressures and, more generally, to global pressures.

The unified methodology, which was approved by representatives of the SEE countries, introduced a systematic approach to investment planning. The approach highlighted the regional aspect of environmental protection over political and historical divisions. Additionally, this unified approach provided objective,

long-term, strategic direction to investment planning in the SEE region that will complement national investment planning.

Active involvement by the stakeholders (ministries of environment of the SEE countries, the donor community, IFIs, and NGOs) assisted and enabled the PEIP's development. The PEIP's development in turn helped to build the capacity of the stakeholders, especially within the ministries of environment. Training has been provided on project-cycle management, investment planning, priority setting, prioritising investment projects and identifying investment programmes. The developmental process has also played an important role in stimulating information exchange and cooperation between SEE countries. The regional and, consequently, transboundary context of investment projects suggests that this cooperation should be increased.

The second phase of the project targets the investment challenges in assisting the SAP countries' efforts to build capacity in:

- identifying investment projects that are in line with EU requirements;
- formulating project concepts to be presented to interested financial institutions; and
- identifying appropriate institutions willing to finance investment projects.

Comprehensive guidance material for implementing the PEIP is currently under development. The guidelines will provide assistance to decision makers

#### KEY FEATURES OF THE APPROACH

- **Regional** – Project activities cover the SEE countries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo (territory currently under interim UN administration), and the pipeline of environmental investment projects consists of projects prioritised according to regionally agreed upon criteria.
- **Process** – The project enables the long-term process of compliance with the EU *acquis* and environmental improvement in the region, through providing a regional framework for investment planning and good practices.
- **Stakeholders** – The project introduces a multi-stakeholder approach to investment planning, involving all key players into the process.
- **Collaboration** – The project has developed working relations with key environmental investment initiatives working in the region, including DABLAS, the Project Preparation Committee and the Infrastructure Steering Group for SEE.





for national investment planning; local project proponents for project preparation; and the donor community for designing financial assistance to the SEE region.

The project produced two forms of outputs: institutional strengthening and technical assistance.

Institutional strengthening activities, which provide a basis for regional networking for decision makers on the implementation of investment projects, included:

- three regional workshops on environmental investment projects development in the air, water and waste sectors (2004);
- three regional workshops on tariffs and economic instruments needed for the development of bankable environmental investment projects (2005); and
- a regional meeting for the SEE decision makers and the donor community (2005).

Technical assistance included:

- a guidebook on options for financing environmental investment projects in SEE and a donor profile to assist project proponents seeking finance (2004);
- a study on the status of environmental investment planning providing an overview for decision makers in the SEE region, and for donors on the process of transposing key investment-heavy EU directives (2004);
- an extended database of sites (hot spots), screened against the requirements of selected key investment-heavy EU directives, providing a regional overview of sites not complying with EU requirements (2004-2005);
- a formulation of 33 project concepts in the water, air and waste sectors that are in line with key investment-heavy EU directives, to assist the 33 pilot hot spots in acquiring donor financing (2004-2005);
- a study on the use, enforcement and design of tariffs to assist project proponents in developing bankable environmental investment projects (2005); and
- an updated list of priority environmental investment projects based on PEIP 2003 projects (2005).

Under the leadership and guidance of the European Commission, the PEIP team is committed to cooperating closely with key environmental investment initiatives operating in the SEE region, including the ISG, PPC, DABLAS, and other initiatives, in order to lay the grounds for successful financing of environmental investments and compliance with EU requirements.

### What Comes Next

The development of national environmental investment programmes for compliance with EU requirements in SEE countries and the process of preparation

and financing priority investments are taking place simultaneously. There is a need for coordination of the processes and further institutional support to the environmental authorities to ensure that investment planning and project financing are complementary and will achieve the desired results.

The proposed role of the PEIP for 2006 and beyond has two aspects: provision of continued institutional support for the strategic planning process for EU compliance and support for the identification of appropriate projects for priority financing. Such work could include:

- assistance to SEE national environmental authorities on the development of national environmental investment programmes, including further identification of compliance needs;
- further development of pipelines of infrastructure investment projects for compliance with EU key heavy-investment directives;
- provision of further capacity building, through regionally-focused events, for project proponents (local/regional authorities, utilities, industries) on the identification, development, and financing of bankable environmental investment projects; and
- provision of best practices on the identification, development, and implementation of investment projects from the new EU member states.

### Assistance in Environmental Law Drafting in South Eastern Europe

(A second-phase continuation of the SEE project REReP 1.3)

**Donor:** European Commission

**Amount:** EUR 575,000 (second phase)

**Duration:** September 2003 – September 2005

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration)

### Project Background

Throughout the last three years, the countries of South Eastern Europe have made significant progress in complying with the requirements of and meeting their obligations within the Stabilisation and Association Process. There were considerable efforts devoted to upgrading and aligning domestic environmental legislation with the EU environmental *acquis*. A number of international and bilateral projects provided assistance in developing national environmental legislation. Within the framework of national level assistance, the REReP 1.3 project Assistance in Environmental Law



Drafting in South Eastern Europe, which was implemented during 2001-2003, played a key role in ensuring regional cooperation in the development of environmental law, the transfer of experience within the SEE region, the transfer of lessons learned from both old and new EU member states, and the promotion of a strategic regional approach to the approximation of EU environmental legislation.

The project is implemented on a regional and country/entity level in the beneficiary countries, working directly with ministries responsible for environmental law drafting. All environmental ministries of the region are collaborating on the project and are its major beneficiaries. The project builds upon the experience of regional projects supported under, for example, PHARE, DISAE, TAIEX and bilateral assistance. It is implemented in close collaboration with in-country environmental law assistance projects, EC delegations and European Agency for Reconstruction in the SEE region.

The overall objectives are to increase cooperation and promote a strategic approach in the process of approximation with EU environmental acquis in South Eastern Europe within the SAP, and to facilitate environmental law approximation by building upon experiences of the new member states.

## **Achievements and Progress**

### *Regional Activities*

During the first project phase, the Regional Environmental Law Drafting Network of Senior Officials in SEE (ELDNSO) was formally established. The main objectives are to support regional cooperation on environmental law, to share experience throughout the network and to ensure a regional strategic approach to the ongoing and upcoming legal drafting work through regular coordination meetings of the network and the involvement of international experts. The network was further expanded in the second phase to encompass 45 members – senior officials and legal experts from beneficiary ministries and the REC legal team.

A report covering the first project phase, *Assessing Environmental Law Drafting Needs in South Eastern Europe*, was published in 2003. It provided a regional overview of the state of environmental law and gaps to be bridged in the near future. During the ELDNSO 4 meeting, the scope and methodology for developing a regional report on the second phase was discussed. Participants provided their expectations from the report, as well as a number of recommendations concerning its content, coverage and objectives. In December 2004 the draft outline of the report was adopted, followed by the selection and contracting of an expert to undertake the assignment of coordinating, writing and editing the report.

During the first phase, the project team prepared a matrix of international assistance projects. The matrix provides concise information about international assistance projects on environmental law drafting in the SEE regions and is playing a key role in ensuring synergies between national projects on the regional level and the exchange of outputs and lessons learned throughout the region. During the second phase, the contents of the matrix, which includes country-based legal drafting projects and the directives covered, are being maintained and upgraded. With the aim of making the matrix as user-friendly as possible, its format was upgraded, and the project team drafted a searchable web-based matrix template providing hyperlinks to relevant directives, project outputs, implementing institutions, etc. It will be made available to the public on the REC's website.

Following the ELDNSO network's concept of providing a forum for discussions and information exchange among the network members, the project team organised two ELDNSO regional meetings during 2003-2004: the network's third meeting took place in Sarajevo in July 2003 and the fourth meeting took place in April 2004 in Pula, Croatia. At the third meeting, the participants discussed the results of the first phase of the project at regional and country/entity levels, shared main achievements, difficulties and obstacles in project implementation, and identified lessons learned with regard to the EU approximation process, regional cooperation, and legal drafting prioritisation. At the fourth ELDNSO meeting, the participants discussed the scope, objectives and countries' expectations regarding the second-phase regional report on environmental law drafting and the matrix; the programme for regional topic-oriented workshops and the subsequent ELDNSO meetings; the proposals for study visits; the procedure for drafting priority requests; and, ideas for country/entity-based legal assistance. Both electronically and during network meetings, the countries/entities offer each other assistance on topics where they have produced results relevant to their neighbours. The network has proved to be an excellent tool for ensuring regular communication and cooperation between the ministries based on personal contacts established during ELDNSO meetings.

The project team is providing constant exchange and circulation of relevant documents and laws. It also maintains regular communication and coordinates with managers of major country projects and relevant officials on project planning and implementation at national and regional levels. It has continued to collect and disseminate output and information on ongoing in-country environmental law-drafting projects through the circulation of relevant documents and national laws on the ELDNSO e-mail list.

The project also focused on facilitating the transfer of experience from CEE countries (both in the accession process and new member states) to SEE countries via topic-oriented workshops and study visits. The project's beneficiaries identified the common regional priority EU legislation to be addressed under the project and drafted a programme for topic-oriented workshops. The countries were eager to cooperate in targeting and defining their common regional needs for capacity-building activities. The main regional priorities for topic-oriented workshops were identified as the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Directive, the Water Framework Directive, Waste Directives, and Drafting EU Laws and Strategies for Environmental Approximation.

### *Regional Topic-Oriented Workshops and Study Visits*

The regional workshop on Strategy toward EU Environmental Law Approximation in SEE Region was held in April 2003 in Dubrovnik, Croatia during the first project phase. Eminent speakers from the European Commission's DG Environment, and from CEE and SEE ministries of environment took active part in the workshop session. Thus the workshop became a forum for intensive exchange of experience and views among senior officials and legal experts. It also facilitated the promotion of a coordinated strategic regional approach to EU approximation.

The regional workshop on Approximation of IPPC Directive in SEE countries, which took place in April 2004 in Pula, Croatia was organised back to back with the ELDNSO 4 meeting. It permitted the transfer of lessons learned from EU countries and new member states, as well as the exchange of experience among SEE countries on IPPC approximation. The workshop was a forum for intensive expert discussions and vivid communication. Renowned international experts and joined those from the new member states to provide a wide range of interesting practices and specific approaches to concrete issues that were greatly appreciated by the participants.

The workshop "Approximation of the Water Framework Directive in South Eastern Europe: Transfer of Lessons Learned from EU Countries and New Member States, Exchange of Experience among SEE" took place in October 2004 in Budapest. It was aimed at facilitating and boosting the process of approximation with the Water Framework Directive (WFD) in the SEE region, initiating a common strategic approach for SEE countries toward WFD implementation, which targets ensuring joint management of shared water resources in the region. SEE environmental law and water experts took part in the event and will benefit from the experience of such renowned speakers as Helmut Bloech of the EC, along with senior ministry experts from Germany, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria.

Since the chemical legislation proved to be a priority in several country/entities, and further to the obtained requests for a study visit on chemical legislation in Slovenia, the project team organised a study visit to the Slovenian Chemical Bureau. The event brought 12 participants from Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro to Ljubljana in January 2005. The participants concluded that the Slovenian example is appropriate for the countries in the study visit, due to the similar basic legislation. Slovenia has fresh memories of harmonisation to EU legislation, and the conclusion was that, in the EU approximation process, the adopting of the framework law on chemicals is essential as a first step in transposing of the basic EU chemicals legislation into the national legal system.

### **Country/Entity-Based Activities**

The project team assisted in the country prioritisation of environmental law drafting needs and in the provision of targeted international legal expertise on particular environmental law drafting issues. All the country/entities but Bosnia and Herzegovina submitted official requests for legal assistance under the project. In accordance with the methodology agreed to at the ELDNSO 4 meeting, the countries were invited to submit three priorities for legal assistance. The project team assessed them according to the preliminary criteria presented at the ELDNSO 4 meeting. It also decided on activities within the scope of the project that can be addressed through the available short-term assistance. The EU chemical legislation happened to be a common priority for legal assistance under the project for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and for the two constituent republics of Serbia and Montenegro.

Short-term legal assistance is being provided during the second project phase to the republics of Montenegro and Serbia and to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

#### *Republic of Serbia*

During the first phase of the project, a team of international consultants reviewed the chemical legislation in the Republic of Serbia and described the legal drafting and amendments needed to introduce the EU chemical regulation system in Serbia. As a follow-up to this assignment, and based on an official request from the Republic of Serbia, the same consultants are currently assisting the ministry in drafting their new framework chemical law. The project has supported the translation of selected EU chemical legislation into Serbian. The consultants provided guidelines for the new Law on Chemicals and legal review of the first draft, and presented their comments and recommendations at a one-day workshop in Belgrade to a wide range of stakeholders.

### *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*

The project team organised a workshop on Transposition of EU Chemical Legislation in Macedonia on November 11-12, 2004 in Skopje on EU chemicals based on an official request from the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The workshop provided an overview of the EU chemical regulation system for the first time in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Serbian officials who are presently drafting the chemical law attended the workshop to share their recent experiences. Legal experts from the Republic of Montenegro joined to learn from the experiences of their colleagues. Following the workshop, a team of international experts worked on a legal review supported by this project on the present chemical legislation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. They will also provide recommendations on amendments and further drafting needed.

### *Republic of Montenegro*

A similar chemicals assignment to the one implemented under the phase one of the project in the Republic of Serbia is under preparation for the Republic of Montenegro. Thus the project ensures a transfer of lessons learned from the work in Serbia and simultaneous improvement of the chemical legal system, and assists coping with the legacies of the old legal system in the two constituent republics of Serbia and Montenegro.

### **What Comes Next**

- The regional report on the second phase of environmental law drafting in SEE is being drafted, and will be completed in its final version by the end of July 2005.
- The format of the matrix will be finalised and made available on the REC's website. The matrix will be updated regularly.
- ELDNSO will continue to act as a forum for regional cooperation on environmental law drafting supported by the project.
- The next ELDNSO 5 meeting will be organised jointly with the workshop on waste in April-May 2005.
- Organisation of the following topic-oriented workshops will proceed and the next regional workshop on the approximation with EU waste legislation in SEE will be held in the middle of June.
- The topic and scope of the second study visit will be defined after consultations with the beneficiaries.
- Legal assistance in drafting the chemicals legislation in the Republic of Montenegro and Republic of Serbia, (Serbia and Montenegro) and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will be finalised.
- The remaining country/entity priority requests for short-term legal assistance will be finalised, and the relevant preparations for the subcontracting of the experts will be carried out.
- The exchange and circulation of relevant information, laws, documents and project outputs will continue.
- The project team will widen and intensify communication and coordination on project implementation with the managers of new country/entity projects on environmental law drafting.

## **Support for Acceptance and Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements in South and Eastern Europe**

**Donor:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

**Amount:** EUR 471,000

**Duration:** June 1, 2001 – April 30, 2004

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro

### **Project Background**

Multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) are one of the main means for “converting” international environmental norms into binding rules. The countries of South Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro<sup>3</sup>) have a relatively low rate of accession to MEAs, and face obstacles in implementation due to reduced resources, fundamental restructuring of authorities, and lack of enforcement mechanisms. The high interest in issues related to acceptance and implementation of MEAs in the region can be shown by the fact that this project had the greatest number of expressions of interest to act as lead country of any REReP project: consequently, the lead country responsibilities were rotated among three countries (Albania, Bulgaria and Romania.)

The dual objectives of the AIMS project were to spread international environmental norms to the SEE region and to develop a potentially significant area for interstate dialogue, through increasing the application of relevant MEAs in the SEE countries. The term “application” is understood to cover both the legal applicability (through signature, ratification and acceptance) and the effective implementation (efficient use of existing programmes and networks) of MEAs. The project promoted, in a coordinated, integrated and focused manner, the application of relevant MEAs to assist in the solution of priority environmental problems in SEE

countries, both regionally and on a country-by-country basis. Biodiversity related conventions and the Basel Convention have been identified as priorities for the region among conventions in force. Conventions of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe have also played a significant role.

### Achievements and Progress

The project succeeded in meeting its objectives through the completion of all phases. In the assessment phase, thorough independent country assessments were developed, reviewing the level of acceptance and implementation of major MEAs, which were then used by authorities (together with stakeholders in stakeholder consultations) to define priorities for assistance. Parallel to this, an active network of senior MEA officials and legal experts was established, which met periodically to review progress and plan further activities. These network meetings were also the setting for targeted regional workshops on issues of importance. Based on the country assessments and inter-ministerial/stakeholder prioritisation exercises, concrete topics for national-level capacity-building workshops on priority MEAs were identified, and a series of workshops took place in all beneficiary countries with cooperation from relevant MEA secretariats and international organisations. The knowledge gained through the country assessments, network activities, and capacity-building events are presented in a SEE regional report (currently under publication) which compiles the conclusions and recommendations from all AIMS activities.

The main results of the project were:

- establishment of the AIMS Network: a Joint Network of Senior Officials and Legal Experts;
- seven country assessments on acceptance and implementation of MEAs, posted on the REC website (three of which were separately published in hard copy);
- establishment of national advisory committees as a forum for stakeholder consultations and prioritisation exercises in four countries;
- targeted regional workshops on the Basel Convention and selected ECE Conventions;
- eight national/entity-level (two for Serbia and Montenegro) capacity-building workshops on priority MEAs and MEA issues;
- publication of the *Regional Report on MEA Applicability and Implementation in SEE*; and
- creation of the AIMS website  
<[www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REReP/AIMS/](http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REReP/AIMS/)>.

### What Comes Next

The project beneficiaries have formulated specific requests for continuing the project to support them further in reaching compliance with relevant MEAs. The countries identified the following priorities for further assistance:

- links between different MEAs in order to identify synergies and possible conflicts;
- working more with national focal points under specific MEAs, by organising regional meetings, training the national focal points, etc.; and
- specific activities for specific target groups (decision makers, the business sector, authorities in charge of implementation, etc.).

### Capacity Building for Implementation of UNECE SEA Protocol in SEE Countries

**Donor:** Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, the Netherlands

**Amount:** EUR 50,090

**Duration:** November 2003 – March 2005

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania and Serbia and Montenegro

### Project Background

The UNECE Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (UNECE SEA Protocol) was signed by all SEE countries in May 2003. The SEE countries understand that practical implementation of the protocol will be quite demanding, since it requires the examination of various options for integrating SEA in current planning and programming systems and building adequate capacity for undertaking an SEA in practice.

This project aims to provide an initial regional capacity-building programme to address key implementation issues for the SEA Protocol in selected SEE countries. It will develop region-specific components of the official Capacity Development Manual for the UNECE SEA Protocol and offer an SEE-regional workshop to review the proposed manual with its future users in SEE.

### Achievements and Progress

#### *Task 1: Draft Capacity Development Manual for the SEA Protocol applicable to SEE countries*

The elaboration of a comprehensive Capacity Development Manual for the UNECE SEA Protocol was formally adopted at the third Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention in Cavtat, Croatia (June 2004).<sup>3</sup>



The manual should provide:

- comprehensive materials (slides, accompanying explanatory text and tasks for group work) that can be used directly in national and regional training programmes for the implementation of the SEA Protocol in all its signatory countries;
- guidance materials on the design of effective capacity development strategies for the implementation of the SEA Protocol (with special focus on transitional countries in SEE and the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region); and
- background documents that can be directly used for delivery of training programs for the SEA Protocol.

The REC and UNECE have already developed the drafts of the key modules of the manual.

### *Task 2: Regional training of SEA trainers*

An SEE-regional workshop to review the proposed manual with its possible users took place in February 2005 at the REC's head office in Szentendre, Hungary. Focal points for the SEA Protocol from all signatory countries in SEE and selected NGOs and practitioners were invited to review the draft manual and to provide recommendations for its adaptations.

## **What Comes Next**

### *Task 3: Final draft of the Capacity Development Manual for the SEA Protocol applicable to SEE countries*

A final version of the manual will incorporate comments and suggestions obtained during the regional training of trainers. The manual will be formally reviewed during the Meeting of the UNECE EIA Working Group in April 2005. Plans are to post it to the UNECE website in early summer 2005.

## **Strengthening Environmental Implementation and Enforcement in SEE Countries within the Stabilisation and Association Process: Support for Activities of the Balkan Environmental Regulatory Compliance and Enforcement Network (BERCEN)**

**Donor:** European Commission

**Amount:** EUR 675,000

**Duration:** September 2003 – September 2006

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration)

## **Project Background**

The Balkan Environmental Regulatory Compliance and Enforcement Network (BERCEN) is an informal, country-driven network of authorities responsible for the enforcement of environmental legislation. A component of the Stabilisation and Association Process, it covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration).

BERCEN was established through a European Commission initiative in December 2001. Network activities for the work period 2001-2003 were funded by the European Commission, as well as the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. The European Commission is funding the network work programme for the period 2003-2006.

BERCEN provides technical assistance and facilitates the exchange of experience and information among people involved in environmental inspection, permitting and implementation of environmental laws. By supporting countries in their efforts to achieve EU accession, BERCEN aims to draw closer to IMPEL and became a network for pre-candidate, candidate and acceding countries. BERCEN cooperation and links with IMPEL are crucial in the process of implementing activities related to the EU approximation process.

BERCEN is an evolving network-based on a long-term process of country achievements toward EU membership, as well as approximation and implementation of EU legislation.

## **Achievements and Progress**

The keys to BERCEN's success are country ownership and network leadership. This ensures that participants will respect project results and honour their responsibilities to donors.

BERCEN activities in the project's first phase are in the fields of site inspection, inspection management, human resources in inspectorates, the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Directive, the European Parliament's recommendation providing minimum criteria for environmental inspections, risk assessment and the Seveso II Directive.

The primary objective while implementing the network activities is to deliver quick, tangible, measurable and sustainable results. In order to increase efficiency in deliverables and results, the network is taking output from the 2001-2003 work programme into consideration while compiling its future activities.

BERCEN trained environmental inspectors, organised exchange programmes and study tours, and supported the participation of BERCEN-trained inspectors in international events and projects organised by other networks. The activities that follow were successfully organised during the course of 2003-2004.

The second BERCEN plenary meeting took place in Ohrid, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in September 2003. Participants agreed on the network's work plan for 2003-2006 supported by the European Union assistance programme CARDS. Activities in the period 2003-2006 are focused on three main areas: improving capacity for enforcement; assessing levels of development and network results; and, reporting on the progress using EU standards. These objectives are achieved through:

- developing capacity for implementation and enforcement through train-the-trainer programmes, exchange programmes, study tours, participation in IMPEL projects and cooperation with other networks;
- peer review assessment on countries' enforcement capacity; and
- preparation of the first reports on implementing the IPPC Directive and Parliament's Recommendation Providing Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections, according to EU standards.

The Train the Trainer Programme for environmental inspectors was organised for March, 2004 in Montenegro, Serbia and Montenegro. The training programme was focused on IPPC permitting. As a follow-up activity a study tour was organised in June 2004, aimed at transferring Poland's experience as a new member state on the environmental permitting system in Poland, IPPC implementation, implementation of the Seveso II Directive, and on-site inspection at various installations in Lubljeskie Vojvodship.

Cooperation with IMPEL is crucial in transferring experience and creating closer links between BERCEN countries and EU member states. It has been strengthened through the participation of the BERCEN Secretariat at the 22nd, 23rd and 24th IMPEL plenary meetings. The secretariat provided the IMPEL plenary meetings with updated reports on network activities and achievements. At the 22nd plenary meeting, the secretariat delivered a proposal for IMPEL involvement in BERCEN activities, such as peer reviews, and IPPC and MCEI report assessments. In addition, BERCEN environmental inspectors participated in various IMPEL projects: inspectors from Croatia took part in Waste-Related Conditions in Environmental Permits, while inspectors from Serbia and Montenegro took part in the Implementation and Use of Best Available Techniques Reference Documents (BREFs).

Cooperation with the OECD has also been strengthened through participation of inspectors from Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the OECD project Financing Environmental Enforcement and Compliance. The BERCEN Secretariat participated in the OECD conference on Development of Integrated Environmental Permitting Guidelines.

The 3rd BERCEN Exchange Programme took place in October, in Prague. Its programme focused on IPPC

Directive implementation, reports from IMPEL projects, country presentations, peer reviews in new member states, and the impact on industry competitiveness of best available techniques (BAT). There was significant input from IMPEL — particularly from Finland, Denmark, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Romania.

BERCEN held its third plenary meeting in Brussels, Belgium in December, 2004, co-chaired by a DG Environment representative and the BERCEN Secretariat. This meeting was valuable in indicating the network's future steps as a pre-accession network. Decisions on an extraordinary plenary meeting and a new name and logo for the network were taken. The extraordinary meeting was held in Sofia in March, 2004. In response to an initiative of the European Commission, BERCEN was transformed into a new pre-accession network for pre-candidate, candidate and acceding countries. The network was enlarged; Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey were invited to join. Due to its extended geographical scope and new terms of reference, the new name of the network is the Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network for Accession (ECENA).

### What Comes Next

Activities in 2005 and 2006 will focus on peer reviews of country enforcement capacity and providing assistance in preparing the first reports on implementation of the IPPC Directive and the Recommendation Providing Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections (RMCEI). These efforts will be carried out with expert input from IMPEL countries. Peer reviews will not only assess the progress of implementation, but will provide recommendations and guidance for possible improvement.

Reports on implementation of the IPPC Directive will be prepared using the same format that is applied for EU member states. RMCEI reports will be prepared using the IMPEL guidelines.

Not all BERCEN members are candidate countries, nor are they legally obliged to develop such reports, but these activities will help the countries to achieve EU reporting standards.

### Institutional Strengthening of the Federal Ministry of Physical Planning and Environment of Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ministry of Urbanism, Civil Engineering and Ecology of Republic of Srpska

**Donor:** Italian Ministry of Environment and Territory, through the Italian Trust Fund

**Amount:** EUR 300,000

**Duration:** 30 months (July 26, 2002 – January 31, 2005)

**Beneficiary countries:** Bosnia and Herzegovina



## Project Background

The Dayton Peace Accord created a very complex internal political structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Environmental policy is not regulated at a state level, but at the entity (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina or Republic of Srpska) level. Taxation, customs controls and sector programmes are also governed at the entity level. This complex model of governance disrupts the collection of public revenues and limits employment-creating investments. Also, each of the ten cantons has its own government structure and distinct social and economic development policies and strategies.

In order to overcome these difficulties and adequately and systematically undertake measures to solve environmental problems in the country, by creating legal and technical knowledge for establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Bosnia and Herzegovina entity environmental ministries requested support and assistance through the REC.

In the framework of REReP under the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe 2002, the project Institutional Strengthening of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Srpska and Ministry of Environment of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was initiated and, at the beginning of 2003, was enlarged for additional activities, namely: Preparation of a Framework Environmental Law for Bosnia and Herzegovina and a Feasibility Study for Establishment of Environmental Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Phase two was envisaged to provide assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to increase its effectiveness in adequately solving growing environmental problems, and to create a basis for establishing a professional and independent state environmental agency.

## Achievements and Progress

Support has been offered to the inter-entity Environmental Steering Committee (ESC) for Bosnia and Herzegovina, including inter-entity cooperation and coordination via the following:

- involvement and support for 20 ESC meetings;
- promoting efficient management of resources for actions on environmental issues; and
- delivering relevant and reliable information on the environment to policy makers and the public.

A working group was set up for drafting the Framework Environmental Law and feasibility study for establishment of the Environmental Agency for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The working group includes 19 experts from both entities, as well as state-level and independent experts. The

group is supported by six international experts (four from the Italian Agency for Environmental Protection and Territory, and two experts from Central and Eastern Europe).

The working group proposed work and responsibilities of the future agency, and is considering other existing institutions/bodies responsible for environmental issues. Developed proposals include all necessary structural aspects, responsibilities and tasks, legal basis and financing. The comprehensive feasibility study is based on the actual needs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, examples from other Western European (primarily Italy) and Central and Eastern European (Slovakia) countries, compatibility with existing governmental structures in BiH and actual segment feasibility.

Following this, the working group is completing a wider feasibility study on the future BiH Environmental Agency. Joint work and consultations, comprising four working meetings and five update/operational meetings of the local team, concurred with the development of high-quality working materials.

The Environmental Law was drafted, and assessments of relevant entity/state ministries (in terms of staffing and capacity) were carried out in order to propose the most efficient way to establish the Bosnia and Herzegovina Environmental Agency, the division of work and responsibilities between the agency and other government/entity institutions, and encourage vertical and horizontal cooperation.

The newly established agency will offer professional advice to relevant ministries of environment and responsible entity/state bodies and offer advice and assistance to local authorities on an ongoing basis. It will be the major body responsible for international cooperation in: environmental monitoring and reporting within the country and to the European Environment Agency; environmental data collection and management; environmental awareness raising and other issues related to the implementation, enforcement and coordination of environmental legislation.

The draft Framework Environmental Law prepared by the working group covers two major aspects: general environmental aspects, and the legal basis for establishment of the Environmental Agency. The agency establishment is based on findings of the feasibility study in terms of priority needs and possibilities, and will refer to the comprehensive feasibility study — including the agency's long-term vision for development. The law concept was elaborated further upon request by the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations (the state-level body appointed as responsible for environment as of February 2004).

A study tour to the Italian Agency for Environment and Territory was arranged in order to study the Italian EPA model.

SEE countries have expressed their wish to learn from the experiences of other countries during their process of economic transition and integration with international structures. This programme offers a possibility for institutional and policy development. The Italian EPA, an organisation with well-established legal, institutional and policy functions can greatly aid Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress in capacity building and institutional development.

The study tour to the Italian Environmental Agency (APAT), situated in Rome, took place on February 29 – March 6, 2004. The aim was to acquaint relevant Bosnia and Herzegovina stakeholders from the environmental field with the organisation and function of the Italian Agency to help establish the future Bosnia and Herzegovina agency. In this regard, Bosnia and Herzegovina consultants and representatives from the environmental ministries of both entities participated in this study tour.

The delegation had an opportunity to become more closely acquainted with the organisational structure and functions of the Italian Agency through a series of lectures prepared by APAT department heads. Bosnia and Herzegovina's delegation also had an opportunity to tour the premises of the modern APAT laboratory.

### What Comes Next

The final law proposal within the project is expected to be finalised in the first quarter of 2005, and submitted for adoption by the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, along with the feasibility study.

The project follow-up proposal has been prepared and submitted to the Italian Ministry of the Environment and Territory. The Capacity Building Programme for the Environmental Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Supporting Elements is envisaged as a tool to ensure a quality basis for implementing activities stated and planned under the previous project. Its goal shall be achieved by developing specific training materials regarding the work and procedures within an environmental agency, based on the model and active participation of the Italian National Agency for the Protection of the Environment. Topical training for existing experts within Bosnia and Herzegovina governmental structures dealing with environmental issues will be offered, and will also be extended to other qualified individuals to ensure a wider range of knowledge. Special attention should be given to institutional strengthening of the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, as it is the body responsible for environmental issues.

## Setting up an Operational Unit under the Environmental Steering Committee

**Donor:** European Commission

**Amount:** EUR 698,215

**Duration:** 24 months (October 1, 2002 – September 30, 2004)

**Beneficiary countries:** Bosnia and Herzegovina

### Project Background

The Environmental Steering Committee was set up to overcome difficulties and the lack of common strategy and policy between the two entities on environmental issues, and to work more effectively in the environmental domain. The Office of the High Representative (OHR) first proposed the concept of this inter-entity body in November 1997. On July 11, 1998, the entity governments signed a memorandum of understanding between the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska concerning the establishment of an Environmental Steering Committee (ESC) in Szentendre, Hungary.

Although it appears that there is willingness from all parties to cooperate and adopt a joint approach to environmental issues (including regulatory mechanisms), there was a great lack of operational and trained personnel to assist the steering committee in developing inter-entity cooperation and represent BiH on the international scene.

The overall objective of the project was to support the development of an integrated and coherent policy for protection of the environment through improved cooperation between the two entities. This was accomplished by building up an operational unit at the national level for strengthening the status and role of the Environmental Steering Committee, thus ensuring: harmonisation of the legal framework between entities; delivering timely, relevant and reliable information on the environment to policy makers and the general public; and, promoting and ensuring efficient, proactive management of resources for action on environmental issues.

The operational unit was envisaged as the first step toward establishing the future Environmental Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with professionals trained in six environmental topics (according to the European Environment Agency).

### Achievements and Progress

#### *Task 1: Project Management and Staffing*

Throughout the project realisation term of two years, a team of 41 experts from Bosnia and Herzegovina (as the operational unit) and seven senior experts from EU/accession countries was established for joint work in order to achieve project goals.

The team consisted of six working groups covering the following topics: Nature and Soil, Waste, Water, Air, Legislation, and Information Systems. There were two additional teams — one from Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina and other from Republic of Srpska — each with two professionals. The topics correspond with the EIONET structure of the European Environment Agency. One senior expert was assigned to advise and provide support for each working group. A team of two programmers, three secretaries and a translator supported the experts in day-to-day operational work. Four team leaders (ESC members from both entities) assumed leading roles in all activities and were responsible for overall project decision making and quality control. Day-to-day project management from a technical/logistical point of view was led by the project coordinator — i.e. the REC Country Office Bosnia and Herzegovina team.

### *Task 2: Framework of Activities*

The working groups have explored the poorly understood environmental structure within the country and have prepared and updated a list of institutions collecting and processing environmental data. The list of all contacted institutions was constantly updated throughout the project and is available to all interested parties, structures within the countries, as well as international organisations and other ongoing environmental projects (such as the CARDS projects) that base their work on the findings of this project.

Working groups prepared a report on entity systems and structures in accordance with the project task to provide a broader view of the current environmental situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Used by other projects, the general public also has access to this report.

### *Task 3: Environmental Information System*

The objective of this task was to establish an information system in line with standard methodologies adopted by the EEA and EIONET.

Throughout the realisation of five project tasks, working groups have developed a detailed questionnaire aimed at evaluating the present situation and needs within both entities: i.e. the availability and/or lack of environmental information. The questionnaire was sent to main expert institutions identified in both entities. After collecting the responses, a database of the current state of the art in environmental data collection and processing was created, as well as a list of institutions that will be regular collectors and/or suppliers of environmental data (corresponding to the Main Components Elements, or MCE, in EIONET).

A list of initial “indicators” for Bosnia and Herzegovina has improved information management by

introducing software based on the EEA scheme, both in English and local languages.

Following this was preparation of a proposal for Bosnia and Herzegovina EIONET structure elements. Channels, rules and procedures for communication and information exchange were developed for selected EIONET elements. Collecting environmental data and information from the MCEs on a routine basis was initiated, as well as compiling and evaluating this information. All information is available on the web.

In order to test the developed system, a national report on the State of Environment was designed and is being completed as the very first comprehensive, up-to-date and relevant document of this kind in the country.

### *Task 4: Efficient Management*

The aims of this task — quality control and information exchange with key environmental stakeholders in the country — were ensured by discussing project progress and future steps at each of the 18 Environmental Steering Committee meetings held during the length of the project.

Senior experts from Europe’s EEA thematic centres were available throughout the project for related support.

### *Task 5: Strengthening Capacity*

A lack of adequate training is clearly identified as a major problem, so it was envisaged that adequate training of the operational unit, ESC members and personnel from both ministries would be secured via this task.

During four scheduled workshops the project team had a chance to meet and discuss the most important aspects of the project, elaborate on materials and reach decisions jointly. Workshops focused on: Administration and Organisation (how to organise and to manage environmental issues at the national level, considering context, comparison with EU countries); Legal Aspects (development of legislation at entity levels with regard to EU legislation, international conventions/protocols and requirements for ratification); Information Systems (EEA, development of a national system in line with EIONET, requirements of the Aarhus Convention and public information, indicators); and, Project Cycle Management.

The team had a chance to learn more about environmental data collection, processing and general institutional structure by studying the Austrian Federal Environmental Agency during a field visit to Vienna. Not only has the capacity of core team experts been raised, but a solid basis for knowledge transfer beyond project realisation has been created and encouraged.

### *Task 6: Dissemination*

All project activities were oriented toward more effective communication of environmental information — both to policy makers and the general public.

A project webpage ([www.koo.ba](http://www.koo.ba)) was created, and has been maintained even beyond the project realisation period. It contains all the latest relevant information within the environmental domain of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Information dissemination has been enhanced with regular publication of a project newsletter (four editions), and press releases. Different media have noticed the growing importance of these publications and have reported on numerous project events and results.

### *Overall Assessment*

Despite the very delicate environmental situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, shared responsibilities between the entities (and, to some extent, one state-level ministry), lack of human resources and technical capacity, this project has created a significant basis for all future environmental projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The project was implemented by local experts, with technical assistance from EU experts from EEA thematic centres. Besides the team leaders, all the local experts were junior experts who were motivated through the project to develop careers in their country's environmental field. Now equipped with training and experience, these experts are ready to be recruited by the Environmental Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, once established.

The project also took on an international dimension, which is two-sided:

- It allowed Bosnia and Herzegovina to join the international scene through participation in exercises such as EIONET, and participation in the ratification of international protocols and other agreements.
- It is a guarantee for the international community that the resources granted are efficiently committed for future cooperation and joint work in the environmental domain.

Team cooperation was established through implementation of the EU-funded CARDS projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which build, to a great extent, on the outcomes of this project and further develop activities that have begun: primarily, monitoring and capacity-building projects. This is of significant importance, not only for the continuation and improved qualitative realisation of this project, but for sustainability of the initiated process of monitoring and reporting according to EU standards.

Good cooperation with other projects can contribute to sustained activities begun under this project. One of these is the project titled: Drafting Framework Environmental Law at the State Level and a Feasibility Study for Establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency for Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is the basis for creating a legal background for long-term continuation of operational unit activities.

## **SEE Regional Seminar in Project Preparation**

**Donor:** Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Physical Planning and the Environment

**Amount:** EUR 46,030

**Duration:** January – September 2004

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (territory currently under UN administration), former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

### **Project Background**

The lack of capacity to attract and absorb environmental investment funds at local and regional levels constitutes a serious obstacle to achieving meaningful environmental improvement across South East Europe (SEE). Building upon its past achievements in the field of support to SEE local governments and experts in the identification, preparation and communication of environmental investment projects (with an emphasis on project cycle management and feasibility analysis), the REC developed a training seminar for small- to medium-size local governments, utility companies, and external experts from the SEE region. The objective of the seminar was to increase the capacity to identify and prepare environmental infrastructure projects at the local level across SEE, so that prepared investment projects meet the requirements of available financing sources.

The seminar content aimed at addressing common weaknesses in infrastructure project preparation, and focused on the following issues:

- application of project cycle management in practice, with an emphasis on programming and identification phases and use of the “logical framework” approach;
- development and justification of alternative project solutions;
- preparation of economic and financial analyses;
- assessment of social aspects of projects in terms of impacts on different stakeholders, and institutional aspects;
- successful cooperation between regional/local authorities and outside experts;
- solving problems in a strategic context; and
- using planning and communication tools.

The seminar methodology was interactive, with small groups focused on taking a single environmental case study through the phases of project preparation. The seminar was held in May 2004 in Ohrid, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and was attended by participants from 17 SEE local authorities and utility companies and seven SEE consulting/project management companies.



## Achievements and Progress

As a result of the project, a group of SEE local authorities, utility companies and local consultants received a unique type of training that brings together a comprehensive approach, new concepts, and management tools for environmental investment project design and the preparation process, according to internationally accepted standards.

Specifically, the seminar introduced and stressed the importance of standard, international project-cycle management techniques used in the process of project preparation.

Through sessions on a comprehensive approach to feasibility analysis (including technical, financial, environmental, stakeholder, and institutional analyses), the seminar demonstrated the data, analyses and documentation that have to be gathered and presented when applying for financing from international finance institutions. The seminar also stressed the importance of cooperation and communication between regional/local authorities and outside experts during the process of project preparation, as well as the need to justify and clearly communicate all aspects of the study to potential sources.

According to participant evaluations, the seminar not only improved their understanding of the process and requirements for preparation of environmental investment projects, but encouraged them to be more proactive. According to reports from many donors and financial institutions working in the SEE region, the lack of adequate information and justification is one of the main obstacles to financing environmental investments in the region. The SEE Regional Seminar in Project Preparation project not only addressed this outstanding issue, but laid the ground for a larger follow-up project to address environmental investment preparation in the region.

## What Comes Next

In 2005 the REC began implementing another project aimed at building the capacity of local authorities to prepare and communicate environmental investment projects. This project, Cross-Border Cooperation Through Environmental Planning and Investment, is also aimed at building networks and contacts across national borders, ethnic groups and stakeholders in the SEE region through the inclusion of a wider group of stakeholders (civil society groups, neighbouring and cross-border local authorities, academic and other experts, etc.) into the investment preparation process. The project will have a strong capacity-building component, using similar methodology to that which was developed for the Ohrid regional seminar, and will also provide direct technical assistance for project preparation via the preparation of feasibility studies conducted by local and international experts.

## Promotion of Integration of Environmental Concerns into Sectoral Policies in South Eastern Europe

**Donor:** Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

**Amount:** EUR 62,744

**Duration:** 2003-2005

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (territory currently under UN interim administration)

## Project Background

The project aims at promoting the integration of environmental concerns into urban transport and/or agricultural policy. It stimulates discussion among policy makers about the concept, process and tools of sectoral integration, as well as its benefits and hindrances. The project target groups are senior officials from SEE countries dealing with urban transport, agriculture and environment, and helps build the capacity of SEE institutions in these fields.

Sectoral integration is a concept and process that can lead to sustainable development when environmental concerns are reflected in sectoral policies, together with economic and social concerns. Sectoral integration is a policy-making trend that draws support from strategic environmental assessment and economic instruments. It is an approach that offers policy makers an opportunity to avoid conflicting policy solutions.

## Achievements and Progress

This project assisted SEE countries in integrating environmental concerns into long-term sectoral urban transport and agricultural policies. Two inter-sectoral meetings of senior officials were carried out to present regional needs and priorities, and to suggest effective ways to address these needs.

Representatives of ministries responsible for environment, transport, spatial planning, construction, road funds, municipalities, public transport operators, the scientific community and NGOs from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro (including Kosovo, which is under UN interim administration) met in November, 2004 in Zagreb, Croatia to discuss legislative, institutional and economic measures supporting urban transport and environment policy integration.

The main environmental issues highlighted by the participants were the age of vehicle fleets, fuel quality (use of leaded petrol or diesel with high sulphur content), condition of transport infrastructure (cycling included), urban transport organisation and management, air and noise pollution and air quality, more ade-

quate regulations for operators of public and private transport, urban sprawl, low awareness of environmental impacts of urban transport schemes, promotion and support for environmentally friendly transport schemes (trams, trolleys, public transport in general, walking and cycling), park-and-ride and car-share schemes, decreasing public transport ridership; and development of integrated transport and environment strategies.

Participants discussed the status of urban transport and environment integration in South Eastern Europe, the most promising measures for urban transport and environment policy integration. Possible directions for future work in selected areas were identified, such as development of integrated urban planning, strategic environmental assessment of urban transport and land use plans. Programmes and policies should be carried out to reflect urban transport impacts on environment or promotion of use of economic instruments, addressing impacts of urban transport on environment, contribute to environmental project financing and changes in consumer behaviour, and promote sustainable modes of transport.

The meeting of SEE Senior Officials representing ministries for environment, ministries for agriculture, national authorities responsible for nature protection and experts was organised in April in Tirana, Albania. The meeting was supported by a background document which provided participants with an overview of the most relevant environmental pressures and concerns emerging from agricultural activities in the SEE region. The document also described the way these aspects are addressed through policies, strategies and regulations. The paper provided the first inventory of types of policy integration in use and relevant to the SEE region.

Based on the presentations and discussions, the participants concluded that the following integration issues relevant to the region can be addressed realistically: increasing the efficiency of land use for agriculture in a sustainable manner, designing proper direct support systems that prevent the depletion of resources and damage to environment, defining rights and responsibilities of land users (i.e. the Code of Good Farming Practice), and providing incentives for desirable environmental outputs not compensated by the market (e.g. landscape and biodiversity conservation).

Possible solutions to the agricultural pressures on the environment were defined at the meeting such as: cross-compliance mechanism or production quotas, agro-environmental measures, de-coupling of subsidies from the amount of produced crops, and implementation of good agricultural practice. These measures require an increase in direct support.

## What Comes Next

Participants at the two meetings have seen continuous support for networking as one of the preconditions for cooperation on sectoral integration. These types of networks composed of professionals working in urban transport, agriculture or environment can exchange questions, ideas, best practices, policies and know-how, as well as search efficiently for project partners.

## Local Environmental Action Plans in Western Balkans (LEAPs)

**Donor:** Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)

**Amount:** EUR 2,761,170 (Albania: EUR 768,000; Bosnia and Herzegovina: EUR 695,210; former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: EUR 627,960; Serbia and Montenegro: EUR 670,000)

**Duration:** 2004-2006

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro

## Project Background

Environmental planning is a key to effective use of local resources in environmental management. Local environmental action plans (LEAPs) can greatly aid the solution of environmental problems at the local level. LEAPs involve developing community vision, assessing environmental issues, setting priorities, identifying the most appropriate strategies for addressing top problems, and implementing actions that achieve real environmental and public health improvements. The region covered by the project faces numerous environmental problems that need to be identified and addressed. LEAP provides a clear picture of these problems and outlines concrete steps for making improvements.

LEAP serves as an outline document for coordinated implementation of projects. It involves local authorities, high officials, experts, media, and communities. This project provides support for the development of LEAPs to 21 selected municipalities in four Western Balkan countries.

The main goals of this project are:

- to define, estimate and rank environmental problems at the local level, based on risk to human health, eco-systems and overall quality of life;
- to create LEAPs that will develop strategies and activities for decreasing the environmental risks in selected municipalities; and
- to raise public awareness and responsibility for protection of the environment, and to increase public support for environmental investment in the municipalities.



One very important result of the project is the adoption at national level of a methodology recognised as standard procedure for the development of LEAPs.

The project includes some regional events, which will be used by municipality representatives to exchange information and experience – such as their LEAP development status, methodologies, planning processes, problems and barriers – and to identify progressive solutions during joint discussions

## Achievements and Progress

### *Assessing National LEAP Development*

A country assessment was developed for most of the countries involved in the project on existing LEAP experience in terms of methodologies, donors, barriers, new legal framework, implementation status, and community involvement. The proposed methodology for LEAP development in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was officially accepted by the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning.

National meetings and workshops were organised with experts, governmental and municipal representatives to present the project, facilitate discussion of LEAP methodology and local investments. Training modules (LEAP kits) have been developed to facilitate the transfer of local-level know-how. Twenty-one municipalities throughout the region were selected to receive support for LEAP development. REC country offices and mayors of the selected municipalities signed agreements on cooperation with regard to implementation of the LEAPs. All municipalities participated in the project by providing administrative support and logistical assistance for LEAP teams. They nominated operational focal points (municipal LEAP coordinators) to provide efficient municipal and project liaisons. Municipal LEAP coordinators served as key members of the stakeholder group.

Stakeholder groups and working committees (local experts) nominated by local stakeholders play an important role in developing LEAPs for their municipalities. Municipalities have been asked to follow the principles of equal representation of different social, ethnic and gender groups.

Civil society and communities were contacted and consulted during the preparation process. The informative leaflets, fact-sheets and posters containing basic information about the project were designed and distributed in communities in order to raise public involvement and participation in LEAP activities. Public opinion polls are designed in order to facilitate direct feedback during the development process. Information obtained from these exercises is used during the process of formulating a community vision for these municipalities. An especially important role has been played by local environmental NGOs.

Concerning regional activities, the first regional workshop was held in Albania (October 2004), bringing together the representatives of all involved municipalities. Participants discussed LEAP progress, public participatory methods and gender integration into local environmental planning.

The second regional meeting entitled “LEAPs for the Earth” was held in April 2005 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Representatives of 20 municipalities from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro, representatives of REC Country/Field Offices from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Turkey, representatives of international, non-governmental and other organisations, representatives of authorities and other high officials participated at the meeting. Earth Day, with an eco-fair for 20 municipalities from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro, was celebrated within the meeting.

## What Comes Next

From 21 Municipalities, 19 are expected to finalise their LEAPs during 2005. The rest will finish in early 2006. Draft LEAP documents should be adopted by the municipal councils in each municipality.

In order to mobilise funds for the implementation of LEAP activities and present a model on the implementation of LEAP priorities, a Local Environmental Investment Fund (LEIF) component will follow LEAP preparation – becoming functional for municipalities in 2005-2006. Priority immediate actions identified in action plans will be supported through the REC's granting procedures.

Two more regional workshops are planned for exchanging experiences and building partnerships: the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Autumn 2005) and Serbia and Montenegro (Spring 2006).

### LEAP INFORMATION ONLINE

REC country offices have posted information regarding LEAP progress, in addition to assorted literature and guides, on local-language webpages:

#### **Serbia and Montenegro**

[www.recyu.org/yz/izdanja/2004/LEAP.htm](http://www.recyu.org/yz/izdanja/2004/LEAP.htm)

#### **Albania**

<http://albania.rec.org/programe/LEAP>

#### **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

[www.rec.org.mk/LEAP/LEAP.htm](http://www.rec.org.mk/LEAP/LEAP.htm)

#### **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

[rec.org.ba](http://rec.org.ba)

## Kosovo Environmental Action Plan (KEAP)

**Donor:** Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

**Amount:** EUR 300,991

**Duration:** July 2004 – January 2006

**Beneficiary countries:** Kosovo (territory currently under UN administration)

- to determine short-term and long-term priorities in environmental protection;
- to develop, within possible limits, scenarios for implementing specific priority measures;
- to design concrete action plans with the basic aim of solving priority issues; and
- to propose steps for progress monitoring and indicators to follow the state of the environment.

### Project Background

Preventing further environmental degradation in Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration), while promoting improvements, is essential for safeguarding public health and balanced economic development. Environmental planning is considered as the first important and necessary step for the effective use of resources and environmental management.

Achieving a sustainable development path is a long-term primary objective of Kosovo (territory currently under UN administration) and its institutions. An important step in this direction was the Kosovar Environmental and Sustainable Development Strategy prepared by the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning and the REC's field office there servicing this territory. During the strategy preparation, close cooperation was established with the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, and with all stakeholders and the local environmental movement.

The overall goal of the project is to prepare the Kosovo Environmental Action Plan and the List of Priority Environmental Investment Projects. In order to have a successful KEAP process and document, strong leadership and ownership are necessary.

The objectives of the project include:

- to describe the main environmental problems in accordance with the main directions defined in the sustainable development strategy, with participation of different stakeholders (media, sectors and partners);
- to define and describe the sources of environmental pollution;
- to assess legal, institutional and economic aspects related to environmental protection;

### Achievements and Progress

#### *Preparatory Phase*

Before signing the contract with SIDA for implementation of the Kosovo Environmental Action Plan, REC Field Office Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration) signed a preliminary agreement with the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning. This agreement paved the way for defining the roles and duties during project implementation.

#### *KEAP Drafting Phase*

The first introductory workshop in Pristina was held in September, 2004. Working groups were established on the priorities identified in the sustainable development strategy. Group members provided the background documents, work plan outline and tasks. In total, 131 officials from different ministries, academia, local experts and NGOs were involved in the first phase of KEAP drafting. Participants took part in a two-week training session that took place in November and December 2004, delivered by Ramboll Natura. The training during the first week was held in Pristina; the training was held during the second week in Mavrovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. During the training, the participants paid a visit to the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to discuss the drafting of their second National Environmental Action Plan.

An introductory meeting for a forum for building broad social consensus on the KEAP process was held in March 2005. The first draft was presented to the forum for comments and included in the document. The draft thematic document was analysed at a meeting of the working groups. The meeting with the steering committee for evaluation of KEAP process took place in March 2005, and the compilation of a second draft by working groups in consultation with the project management team and economic group was held in April 2005.

## What Comes Next

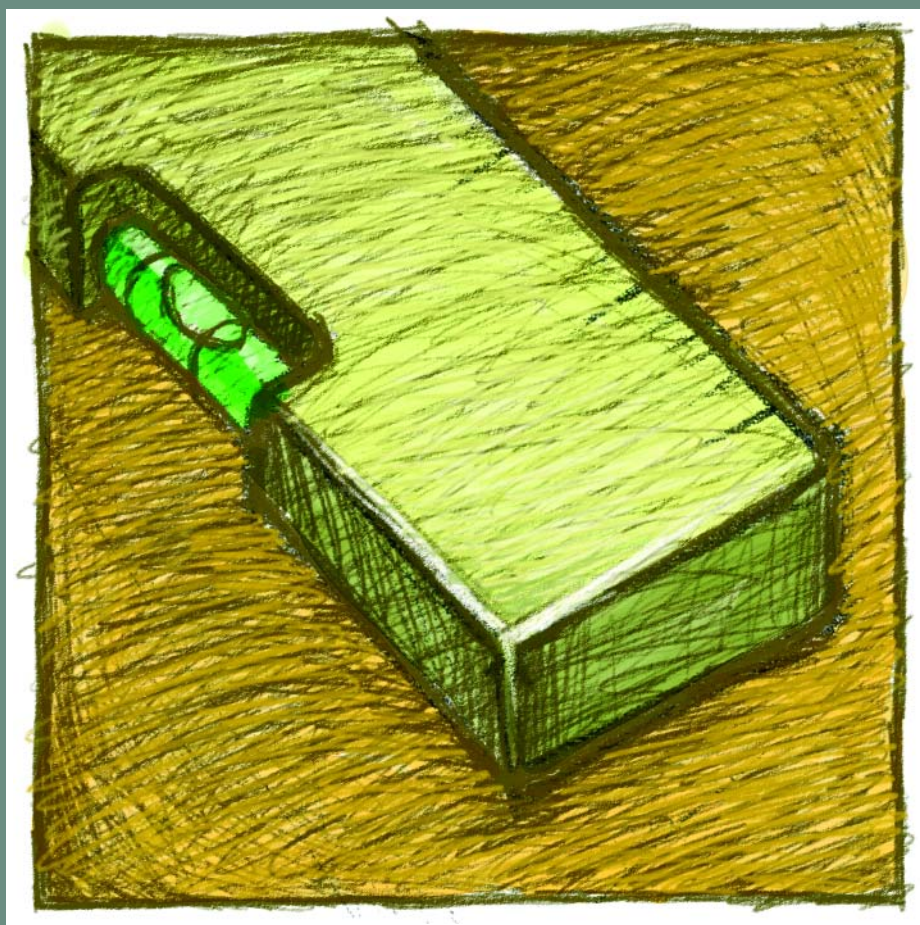
The following activities are envisioned:

- a second meeting of working groups, project management team and task force (spring 2005);
- compilation of a final thematic document; draft KEAP (early summer 2005);
- presentation of a draft KEAP document to the forum (early summer 2005);
- preparation of priority project briefs (May-October 2005);
- final consultation with the task force (summer 2005);
- presentation of a final draft to the steering committee (autumn 2005);
- workshop for analysis of final draft KEAP, and the priority list of projects and its introduction to interested entities and donors (autumn 2005);
- compilation of final KEAP document and priority list of projects (December 2005);
- translation and printing of KEAP document (January 2006).

## Endnotes

- 1 The same basic entry requirements apply to the countries of the Western Balkans as to other countries that aspire to join the European Union: namely, the political, economic and institutional criteria established by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993 and set out in Articles 6 and 49 of the EU Treaty. The countries must also meet the criteria specific to the SAP as set out in the Conclusions of the General Affairs Council in April 1999,<sup>7</sup> and in accordance with the Commission Communication of May 1999 on the establishment of the SAP. These criteria include full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), respect for human and minority rights, the creation of real opportunities for refugees and internally displaced persons to return, and a visible commitment to regional cooperation. Important principles established during the present enlargement process also apply to the countries of the Western Balkans: each country proceeds towards membership on its own merits and at its own speed.
- 2 Note: Kosovo (territory under UN Interim Administration) was invited to participate in the project with respect to the implementation of MEAs on its territory, but declined.
- 3 Visit [www.unece.org/env/documents/2004/eia/mp.eia.2004.10.e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/env/documents/2004/eia/mp.eia.2004.10.e.pdf).





## Support to Environmental Civil Society





# Support to Environmental Civil Society

The need to develop a strong and well functioning civil society is understood as a cornerstone of democratic societies. As such, there are a multitude of roles that civil society performs, including: advancing democracy and pluralism under the rule of law; promoting and enforcing transparency in the government and the economy; supplying alternative institutions that serve public needs; and improving decision making by including a more efficient representation of public and private interests.

Support to civil society has been a REReP priority from the very beginning. Civil society serves as a vital element in ensuring that investments made during reconstruction reflect broad public interest, and that democratically based, institutional capacities are truly embedded. Furthermore, support to environmental civil society was seen as contributing to democratic development, national and international stability and security and solution of environmental problems of the Balkan region. Naturally, the challenge has been to determine the most effective and efficient means to support this priority.

The projects described and developed within the REReP context demonstrate the breadth of action needed to support this sector. Financial support to NGOs has concentrated on helping them to prepare projects on sustainable development, thereby supporting environmentally responsible development. While other granting projects have financially supported NGOs in specific countries, including Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, support to national and regional electronic networks has included strategic planning exercises, targeted training and infrastructure provision. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, and Serbia and Montenegro, along with other Danube countries, also received support through the Danube Regional Project with small grants to NGOs and enhancing access to information and public participation in environmental decision making.

The importance of strong legal structures was demonstrated through a project assisting environmental legal advisory and advocacy centres in the region. Environmental education, a primary base for forming public knowledge and opinion, has been supported by the development of education materials and teacher training

in Albania. It is hoped that these and other project results can be built upon in the future, because however successful these activities have been it is still necessary for a concerted and long-term effort be made to aid the burgeoning NGO movement and ensure that the role and operation of civil society in the SEE region endures.

A presentation of SEE environmental NGOs network, which played an important role in the REReP process, is provided below. Despite their clear priority and focus on local and national problems, SEE environmental NGOs recognise that effective regional networks, as a tool for regional cooperation relaying on existing capacity, can contribute significantly to environmental movements, mobilising resources and articulating credible input into relevant international processes.

## Regional Initiatives for Sustainable Development in the Western Balkans

**Donor:** European Commission, Europe Aid

**Amount:** EUR 1 million

**Duration:** July 2003 – January 2006

**Beneficiary countries:** *Western Balkans:* Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration)

## Project Background

The main goal of this grant programme is to encourage and support national and regional NGO activities for sustainable development in the Western Balkans. This programme aims to assist civil society in South Eastern Europe to prepare and implement sustainable development in practice. It will build on the regional and local initiatives of NGOs and governments that are already underway, and support the development of new sustainable development initiatives where they do not exist. These efforts involve various competitive granting programmes at the national and regional levels to strengthen NGO capacity to carry-out their own projects, enabling them to contribute to the sustainable development of their region at the national and regional levels. Further, this programme will enable NGOs to:

- strengthen their positions and define their roles in effectively improving environmental quality at the local and regional levels by promoting sustainable development issues, such as: sustainable lifestyles, GMO-free environment, renewable energy, the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources, organic agriculture, good governance, and social equality;
- raise the population's awareness of sustainable development in order to alter their behaviour towards more environmentally friendly ways;
- collaborate with their governments in developing sustainable development priorities for their countries and address them through a cooperative approach; and
- cooperate with other NGOs to address the cross-border, regional environmental issues, in particular those related to regional development.

This project is implemented through two main components:

- nationally based granting programmes for NGOs, up to EUR 10,000;
- regional grants programmes for NGOs, up to EUR 35,000.

### Achievements and Progress

Grants were awarded at the national level in two rounds in 2004, while regional grants were awarded in one round the same year. The project was established and taken to the point where NGO projects have been selected and all award agreements signed. The following activities have been carried out:

- The project's parameters were established, and supporting documents were drafted.
- REC staff involved in the project (head office and country offices) were provided training on sustainable development theory.
- Calls were announced at both national (two calls) and regional levels (one call), in local languages for national grants and in English for regional grants.
- Concept papers were collected from NGOs throughout the region, by country offices (604 in total) and the REC head office for regional grants (26 in total).
- Concept papers were evaluated by REC staff. A total of 227 CPs were chosen to move on to the full proposal stage at the national level, and 10 were chosen at the regional level.
- The full proposals submitted (170 at the national level, 10 regional) were evaluated by expert panels consisting of independent experts and REC staff.

- In total, 71 projects were chosen in two rounds at the national level, with a total budget of EUR 552,329. At the regional level, six projects were selected, totalling EUR 162,742. Overall support for NGOs in the region reached EUR 715,071. The projects address sustainability issues that range from GMOs, soft tourism and ecological agriculture to Local Agenda 21 and transport.

The REC has prepared an extensive website that displays the results at regional and national levels. The main web page of the programme is under the REC head office website, but links have been created to the websites developed in national languages. For details, please visit: [www.rec.org/REC/Programs/NGO\\_support/Grants/SustainableDevelopment/Default.html](http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/NGO_support/Grants/SustainableDevelopment/Default.html).

### What Comes Next

Grant agreements were signed with the successful NGOs, and the grants' implementation will be monitored at the national and regional levels until 2006. Monitoring will consist of direct and electronic communication, as well as field visits conducted by the REC to monitor the project implementation of each of the awarded NGOs at the national and regional levels.

The results of the grant programme will be presented at a regional conference to be organised in one of the Western Balkan countries in October 2005. The most successful regional project(s) and the best practices identified at the national level will be presented in detail during the event. The conference will bring together representatives of beneficiary NGOs from the target region – and possibly national and local stakeholders that have either been involved in the NGO projects or indirectly benefited from the projects' results. The specific objectives of the conference are:

- to allow for an exchange of experience among the Western Balkan countries;
- to illustrate good practices in terms of NGO actions for sustainable development and cooperation with other stakeholders;
- to demonstrate the benefits of parallel actions at regional and national levels;
- to form links across the Western Balkans between NGOs dealing with sustainable development; and
- to lay the groundwork for follow-up actions.

Following the conference, a publication will be prepared and published containing conference proceedings and information on successful projects. It is hoped that the grants programme and the conference will prompt further thought and donor support for NGO initiatives for sustainability.

## **Balkan Bytes: Environmental NGO Electronic Networking in South Eastern Europe** (A continuation of Promoting Networking and Cooperation of Environmental NGOs: Establishment of Electronic Computer Networks on a National and Regional Level, REReP 2.3)

**Donor:** Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway (first phase); Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands (second phase); Ministry for the Environment and Territory, Italy (third phase)

**Amount:** EUR 100,000 (first phase), EUR 650,000 (second phase), EUR 591,100 (third phase)

**Duration:** 2001 (first phase), 2002-2003 (second phase), 2004-2005 (third phase)

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration)

### **Project Background**

This project provides assistance to environmental NGOs in South Eastern Europe to increase their networking and cooperation. It pursues this goal by creating and supporting environmental NGO electronic communication networks. The ultimate objective of NGO networking is to strengthen the environmental civil societies of SEE countries, to improve transboundary cooperation and information exchange and, as a result, improve the state of the natural environment.

Activities were implemented through four sub-tasks: supporting an NGO steering group to run each network; improving the communication skills of environmental NGOs through training programmes; maintaining a regional information hub and help desk; and, providing technical assistance.

In countries where there was an already functioning and internationally acknowledged environmental NGO network (i.e. Romania and Bulgaria), most project activities were performed by the networks from the very beginning. In those countries without a functioning electronic network, the REC country/field offices started project implementation. Once networks and their NGO steering groups were up and running, project implementation was gradually shifted over. By the end of the project in 2005, NGO ownership and implementation will become complete in all beneficiary countries.

The project was implemented along basic principles, such as transparency and democratic functioning, the principle of subsidiarity (decentralisation of activities) and extensive involvement of the environmental NGO community in all planning, implementing, and supervising activities.

As the project progressed, all information was continuously made public through the project website <[www.rec.org/REC/Programs/SEE\\_Networking/](http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/SEE_Networking/)>.

### **Achievements and Progress**

At the beginning of the project there were major obstacles to using the Internet to exchange information and work jointly to solve environmental issues. Many NGOs did not even have a computer, and most of them did not have access to the Internet, or were not aware of the strategic value of online collaboration. The status at the beginning of the project is documented in the *Networks at Work* publication, accessible in print as well as on the project website.

While this project did not focus on solving particular environmental problems, it provided NGOs with a very powerful tool for joining forces; and enabled them to radically increase their work's impact. One significant accomplishment of the project is that every SEE country now has a functional electronic network, recognised as a key communication and collaborative platform. These networks even take on the task of representing the NGO community to other entities, such as national governments.

By now, almost every environmental NGO in SEE has a computer, has access to the Internet, and uses it in its daily work. It is now fairly common to implement online campaigns, work on cross-border environmental issues, publish and read news or distribute action alerts.

A real success story is the case of the Regional Environmental Content Sharing initiative, an online news portal accessible at <[www.see-environment.info](http://www.see-environment.info)>. Covering a region fragmented by numerous national borders and the fresh memory of war, the portal provides a wealth of English-language environmental news from all corners of the region. As intensive updates were guaranteed through a partnership of eight communications networks, the site's readership grew rapidly, quickly drawing significant international recognition. The most prominent distinction was that the portal became nominated as a finalist for the Stockholm Challenge Awards.

Partners, and at the same time the beneficiaries of the project, include the following eight networks: Bluelink Information Network (Bulgaria), EkoMrezaBiH (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Eko.Net (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), StrawberryNet (Romania), QKE (Albania), Volvox (Serbia and Montenegro) and Sharri.Net (Kosovo – territory under interim UN administration). With the help of the project these networks are able to efficiently mobilise resources across borders and in little time. Examples of campaigns that needed and received support through partner networks include plans to construct large power stations on pristine rivers in Bosnia and Herze-

govina, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro, the disputed Druzba Adria oil pipeline and motorway construction projects in sensitive environmental areas.

Building on these strong foundations, the project was further enhanced as part of an Italy-sponsored project, cooperating with an Italian partner organisation called L'Umana Dimora Onlus. Through a series of study tours and thematic training courses in Italy, network representatives were able to increase the impact of their work, deepen their cross-border cooperation activities and increase their knowledge in specific areas; such as strategic network development, training skills (targeting the better education of network users), online publishing, media savvy and technical computer skills.

### What Comes Next

Fulfilling its original mission to act as a catalyst in the development of environmental communications networks, the project will end in spring 2005. While the results of the project are well visible and the supported networks have become key players in society, there is still much to be done.

Most importantly, sustained financing for activities remains a significant problem. Networks face growing difficulties to attract donor funding, while their user base is not strong enough to cover costs. Therefore, three key ideas were promoted towards the end of the project that will likely remain priorities in the coming

years. One of them is the concept of “mission-driven business planning,” which promotes the launch of fee-based services and products to channel this income to pursue the networks’ original missions. The other main path to increasing the financial stability of networks is to start servicing and collecting service fees from other stakeholder groups, primarily non-environmental NGOs. Thirdly, a diversification of funding sources will also be necessary.

Obviously, all of these approaches include significant risks along with their potential benefits. Further research and practical support are essential to ensuring their further transition into networks that focus on their missions while increasing financial stability.

### Connecting Networks

**Donor:** Ministry of Housing, Physical Planning and the Environment, the Netherlands

**Amount:** EUR 50,000

**Duration:** Sept 1, 2004 – Sept 1, 2005

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration)

### Project Background

The project’s overall goal is to sustain and connect networks that were established through three REReP information projects during 2001-2003 and financed by the Ministry of Housing, Physical Planning and the Environment of the Netherlands. The three projects include networks of environmental information system professionals (REReP project 1.8), environmental NGO electronic networks (REReP project 2.3) and environmental media professionals (REReP 2.1).

The Connecting Networks project includes two key activities. First, an inventory of relevant alternative, low-cost software was produced with special relevance given to environmental information management. Its focus was determined by the needs and priorities discovered by all three REReP projects. However, the main foundations of the research are based on recommendations published in *Snapshot of Environmental Information Systems in South Eastern Europe*. The figure on the following page illustrates the key types of software the research is targeting.

Second, a discussion fora/training was organised, at which representatives of the above projects discussed progress in environmental information access in SEE countries, updated priorities for a possible second phase of the aforementioned REReP projects, and received training in geographic information systems.

#### RELEVANT RESOURCES ON THE INTERNET

##### Balkan Bytes

[www.rec.org/REC/Programs/SEE\\_Networking/](http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/SEE_Networking/)

##### Environmental Content Sharing in South Eastern Europe

[www.see-environment.info](http://www.see-environment.info)

##### Bluelink, Bulgaria

<http://bluelink.net/en/>

##### EkoMrezaBiH, Bosnia and Herzegovina

[www.ekomrezabih.net/](http://www.ekomrezabih.net/)

##### Eko.Net, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

[www.eko.net.mk/](http://www.eko.net.mk/)

##### Green Forum, Croatia

[www.ekologija.hr/](http://www.ekologija.hr/)

##### QKE, Albania

[www.qke-al.org/](http://www.qke-al.org/)

##### Sharri.Net, Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration)

[www.sharri.net/](http://www.sharri.net/)

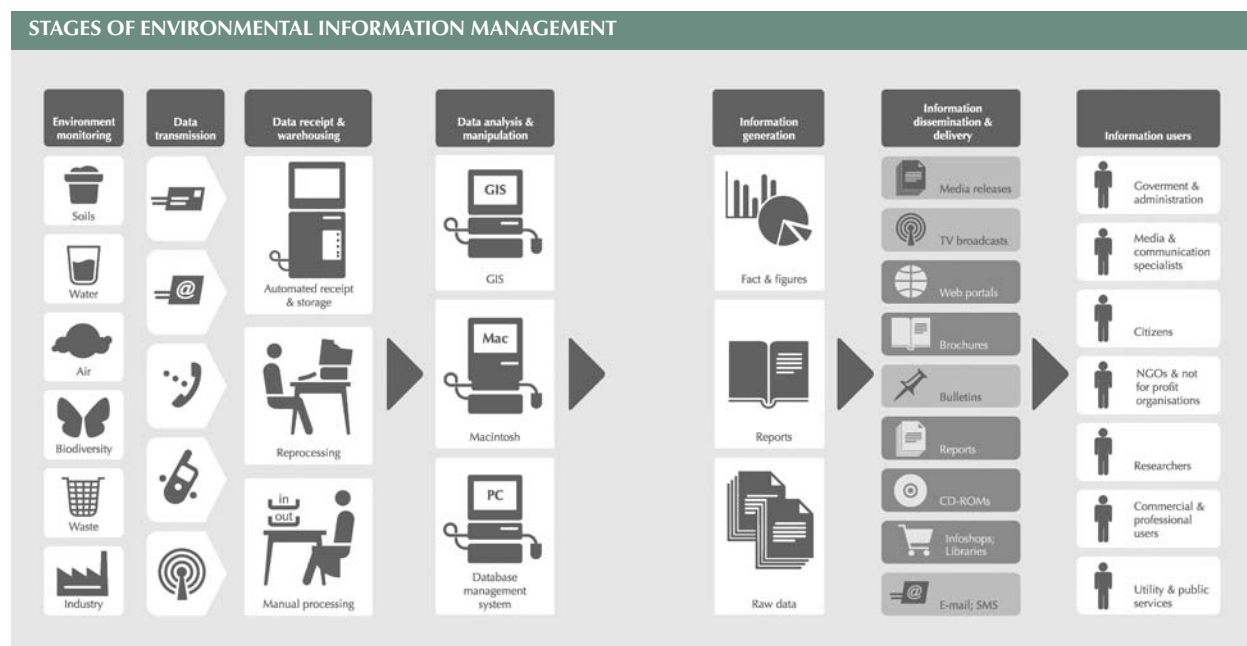
##### StrawberryNet, Romania

[www.ngo.ro/](http://www.ngo.ro/)

##### Volvox, Serbia and Montenegro

[www.erc.org.yu/volvox/](http://www.erc.org.yu/volvox/)





### Achievements and Progress

The project team collected data for the inventory of alternative and low-cost software. An expert of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was selected for this task who has extensive experience in the field, as well as a long history of working relations with relevant institutions.

The research focused on:

- identifying needs and corresponding software;
- testing and evaluating software; and
- filling out detailed data sheets for each programme application;

The resulting 50-page inventory, *Greenware: Low-cost Software Alternatives for Environmental Alternatives for Environmental Information Management*, is accessible online as a downloadable PDF report at the project website: [www.rec.org/connectingnetworks](http://www.rec.org/connectingnetworks).

The workshop, held in Belgrade in June 2005, was attended by about 40 environmental information professionals, and realised the aforementioned objectives. It concluded with a regional statement that summarised progress and priorities for environmental information management and exchange, and public access in South Eastern European countries/territories. It also emphasised the importance of continuing and fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration, improving the capacity for environmental information management, and improving the reporting, quality and usability of official environmental information so as to be easily understandable by the general public.

The “Belgrade Statement” was complemented by REReP network statements that reflected priorities and progress in their respective areas. All results are online at the project website.

### Environmental Legal Advocacy/Advisory Centres

**Donor:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

**Amount:** EUR 500,000

**Duration:** June 1, 2001 – April 30, 2004

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro

### Project Background

Donors targeting South Eastern Europe have turned their attention toward a concerted, long-term effort to rebuild social, legal and institutional structures. Experience has shown that the environmental field presents special opportunities for dialogue, offering a focal point for cooperation and unified action, which may facilitate reconciliation between communities. Pluralism and an open society contribute to the resolution of problems through dialogue. Independent, non-governmental institutions of professionals – such as lawyers – are critical to “levelling the playing field” and ensuring that pluralistic dialogue and problem solving take place in a fair and transparent manner, backed up by the rule of law. On a more basic level, the public’s confidence in post-Socialist institutions and methods of problem

solving will be enhanced when the public is able to see immediately the effectiveness of legal mechanisms to achieve just results, including securing compensation for environmental harm.

The project offered support for lawyers or their organisations to set up and operate environmental legal advocacy and advisory service centres, with the aim that such centres will become sustainable institutions in the future. The activities were built upon similar experience in CEE and EECCA countries to strengthen the capacity of environmental civil society in the use of legal tools for environmental protection.

The beneficiaries of the activities included citizens and NGOs, as well as public authorities, judges, prosecutors and others. The approach taken emphasised cooperative solutions, backed up by the rule of law. A part of the activity of the centres was to test the application of the Aarhus Convention (the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters), which recognises that the rights and opportunities provided in connection with access to information and public participation must be backed up by legal and institutional guarantees. In addition, the centres gave advice to NGOs and civil society actors on various issues including registration, taxation, organisation and governance. Intensive on-ground support from an experienced lawyer was provided. The initiative included studies of successes and failures in the CEE and EECCA regions, with particular attention to start-up and sustainability.

### Achievements and Progress

The project has met its objectives to identify independent environmental lawyers or organisations in South Eastern Europe and to build their capacities for the provision of independent, non-governmental environmental legal advocacy and advisory services to citizens, NGOs, authorities and other stakeholders. The project results show that public confidence in institutions and the methods of problem solving is enhanced when the public is able to see immediately the effectiveness of legal mechanisms to achieve just results, including compensation for environmental harm.

The project beneficiaries (including network lawyers and members of the public who received legal services) demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm, participation and support for the project's new approach to ensuring a high level of environmental protection through the use of legal tools. The network represents an opportunity to build upon an existing set of highly positive results and deserves continued support. The main results of the project were:

- functional and sustainable pilot environmental legal advocacy/advisory centre in Bulgaria ([www.bluelink.net/cepp](http://www.bluelink.net/cepp)) delivering professional

legal expertise to citizens and NGOs for protection of their environmental rights and promoting widely the principles of the rule of law in environmental matters to the legal practitioner community and public authorities. The centre has been working on cases related to the environmental impact assessment procedure (e.g. highway construction projects, ski resort development, landfill closing, and the Kozloduy Nuclear Power Plant); access to environmental information (related to, for example, the location of GMO crops, and nuclear installations) and statutes for protected areas (e.g. the Pirin Mountains).

- Administrative and judicial environmental cases were brought forward in Bulgaria, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Romania for the protection of environmental rights that address key issues, such as: access to environmental information, environmental impact assessment procedures, and statutes for protected areas.
- The Environmental Advocacy Network for South Eastern Europe (EANSEE) was established, consisting of 53 environmental independent lawyers – from all the beneficiary countries – with strong interest and commitment to public interest environmental law. The EANSEE members established a solid cooperative relationship and are actively assisting each other in their legal advocacy work, both at national and regional levels.
- Six regional EANSEE meetings/workshops were held, designed as a forum for network cooperation and for capacity building exercises on specific environmental public interest law topics and the development of practical skills (e.g. project preparation, management of an organisation, strategic planning, and fundraising).
- Lasting partnership relations have been formed with environmental legal advocacy organisations such as the Environmental Law Service (Czech Republic), the Environmental Management and Law Association (Hungary) and EcoPravo Lviv (Ukraine).

### What Comes Next

The project's long-term impact will be greatly enhanced through further support to the EANSEE members to continue their environmental legal advocacy activities. The EANSEE network has reached critical mass and has taken on young, dedicated and enthusiastic members whose aim is to ensure a high level of protection of environmental rights for all concerned citizens in the beneficiary countries. Unfortunately, many of them have arrived too late to take advantage of the small grants and network activities under the project. In



addition, the success of the Bulgarian Center for Environmental Law has led to imitators in other countries.

These nascent organisations are struggling to survive and would greatly benefit from continued support through the network. Finally, EANSSEE is a network with enthusiastic members who take full advantage of the support that is given and feel obliged to each other. The members have a strong sense of ownership of the network, which further multiplies the impact of international assistance. At present, there is no alternative arrangement for supporting environmental legal advocacy activities in SEE through regional networking, and the REC's strong regional presence ensures significant output.

## Support to the Environmental Non-governmental Organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Donor:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria

**Amount:** EUR 199,885

**Duration:** January 2004–2005

**Beneficiary countries:** Bosnia and Herzegovina

### Project Background

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have always been important for raising the profile of environmental issues. They are key players in the development of civil society in SEE, and environmental NGOs form one of the biggest and most active civil sectors in the region. Working together on environmental activities, people have been rebuilding a sense of community purpose, improving their local environment and introducing a new generation to their responsibilities towards the environment. NGOs also function as a vehicle for public participation. They serve as channels of communication with the public and a voice for public concerns about the government.

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen and support the development of environmental NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their small-scale projects. This objective is achieved through the Local Grants Programme at local and national levels, which strengthens NGO capacity to carry out projects, enabling them to contribute to sustainable development and public participation by carrying out projects on the following topics:

- developing local environmental action plans;
- water management; and
- brown issues (including waste management and rural development).

It also aims to improve transparency and quality of environmental decision making, to build capacity and

to empower local communities to address their environmental problems.

The purposes of the project are:

- to enhance NGO participation in the environmental decision-making process;
- to enhance NGO cooperation with local authorities and central government on environmental issues;
- to address and raise public awareness on environmental issues;
- to initiate the process of LEAP preparation in municipalities, and to mobilise relevant local stakeholders to take an active part and give their contribution to the process of developing LEAPs; and
- to define, estimate and rank environmental problems based on the risk to human health, eco-systems and overall quality of life.

### Achievements and Progress

The project's parameters were established and the project was presented through various information channels (REC Bosnia and Herzegovina website; REC Bosnia and Herzegovina Bulletins; press releases, etc). REC staff also used the opportunities to present the project at various REC events in the country.

The following activities were carried out:

- Materials and documents (announcements, calls for grants, guidelines for full project proposal preparation, evaluation materials for the evaluation process and award agreements, instructions for NGO project implementation, etc.) were prepared for phases and activities.
- Calls for grants were announced in local languages in both entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- The Local Advisory Board (LAB), consisting of experts on a wide range of environmental issues announced in the call for grants, was established.
- Concept papers were collected from the NGOs throughout the country, and the best were selected by the LAB.
- NGOs were informed about the evaluation results and asked to submit full proposals.
- After evaluation of the full proposals, the winners' meetings were organised for granted NGOs and implementation of the projects started.
- A monitoring plan was agreed upon.

Three of the supported projects are local in scope. They involve local NGOs and local municipalities in the process of creating local environmental action plans (LEAPs). Another six local projects focus on water management. Seven national projects have also

been selected, which focus on waste management and rural development.

Implementation of the selected grants began in May 2004, and will continue until September 2005. During project implementation, financial and administrative monitoring has been followed by:

- regularly contacting NGO representatives on ongoing activities;
- monitoring project activities through narrative and financial reports made by NGOs; and
- monitoring meetings with NGO coordinators/leaders of projects.

The first interim report (narrative and financial) was sent to the Austrian Development Agency in November 2004.

### What Comes Next

In 2005 the project will focus on monitoring project implementation, focusing on project impact and visibility of project results. There is a proposal to allocate unspent grant funds to the preparation and printing of a final publication of the Support to the Environmental Nongovernmental Organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina project, as well as to organise training for NGOs that have applied during these three calls but were not selected. The project will end in December 2005.

## Trust Fund for Locally Initiated Environmental Projects

**Donor:** The Royal Netherlands Embassy, Tirana

**Amount:** EUR 1 million

**Duration:** 2.5 years (November 2003 – April 30, 2006)

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania

### Project Background

Every feature of environmental civil society under development can be found in Albania, with the limitations coming from the new experience in democracy and the insufficient donor and state support. In the beginning of 2000, with the reduction of funding opportunities, the consequences of a weak NGO community became visible. The decentralisation processes increased the role of local authorities on environmental management, while the lack of capacity and sufficient funding further limited NGO intervention to local environmental improvement.

To respond to the needs of this situation, in 2003 REC Albania submitted a request to the Dutch Royal Embassy to manage a trust fund that supports local environmental initiatives. The REC network, and REC Albania specifically, have worked in the field of grant giving and NGO support since 1994. Valuable experience was gained through many projects and partnerships at the national and regional levels.

## Achievements and Progress

### *Coaching and Capacity Building for Target Groups*

Detailed guidelines have been prepared for NGOs and other stakeholders for the two phases of the application process: project idea and full proposal stage. Both documents – the “Call for Concept Paper” and the “Guidelines for Preparing Project Proposals in the Framework of Local Environmental Initiated Projects” – contain detailed information regarding the application procedure, writing the proposal, and the evaluation process.

### *Winners’ Meetings*

The scope of these meetings is, mainly, specific training for the chosen NGOs related to implementation of the grant and reporting procedures (activity and financial report). Participants of the meeting are the project leaders and NGO representatives. The NGO representatives are provided with guidelines and forms for reporting the activities and grant finances.

### *Direct Assistance during the Application Process*

There are approximately three deadlines per year for concept papers, which are followed with deadlines for full project proposals. During the application process, REC staff assist applicants before the deadline, clarify topics, priorities, application procedures and the deadline for application. Applications are screened by REC staff, and requests for additional documents, clarifications, etc. are sent to the applicants, stating the deadline for submitting such papers. The completed applications are evaluated by the Trust Fund Evaluation Board according to the REC procedures and predefined criteria.

### *Cooperation with Partners*

During the implementation of this granting scheme, the REC cooperates with other donor organisations on sharing information, sharing ideas, co-funding and monitoring the implementation of awarded grants. The main partners include GEF/Small Grants Programme, the Dutch Development Organisation (SNV), the Peace Corps, GTZ, UNDP and the World Bank.

### *Grant Support Scheme*

The REC received 100 project ideas for the period May 2004 – February 2005. Out of this number, approximately, 45 project ideas have passed the first phase of approval and 32 project proposals have been awarded a total of EUR 400,000.

All of the grants rely on the close cooperation between NGOs and local government structures dealing with environmental priority problems at the local and community level. The main areas of the awarded grants are focused on the rehabilitation of urban areas;

improving green areas in public institutions, public areas, and similar areas; rehabilitation of sewage systems; rehabilitation of forested areas with specific importance (e.g. those featuring endangered species); and anti-erosion activities.

### What Comes Next

The granting scheme will continue: new deadlines will be announced for concept papers and project proposals. The guidelines, application and evaluation procedures will be improved according to the lessons learned during the implementation process of the first phase. Monitoring of the projects will proceed in the implementation phase as a continuous process, which aims to ensure the achievement of the grant objectives, and also to support effective cooperation among NGOs, local government structures and community. The identification of the success stories and sharing of best experiences with other partners, donors and NGOs will take place. This will be done through information exchange sharing and publication of project information.

## Raising Environmental Consciousness through Environmental Education and Information Programme

**Donor:** The Royal Netherlands Embassy, Tirana

**Amount:** EUR 300,000

**Duration:** 2.5 years (November 2003 – April 30, 2006)

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania

### Project Background

Albanian society is facing a variety of environmental challenges. All of these issues need to be brought to the public's attention, starting with the school-age population, as an important investment in the future, but also intensifying appeals to adults.

This project develops a new set of multi-media curricular materials based on the positive results achieved during the implementation of the REC Green Pack in several countries from Central and Eastern Europe. The materials will provide up-to-date environmental information to the environmental stakeholders through modern media. The project goal is to improve the environmental situation in Albania by:

- raising the environmental awareness of school teachers and pupils and, through them, of society as a whole;
- investing in human resources and capacity building in terms of education and public awareness of the environment (training); and

- increasing information exchange on environmental problems in Albania through electronic means, such as the internet.

The programme targets the following groups:

- teachers and pupils (aged 11-16), and
- educators on environmental protection.

Furthermore, the programme is expected to have a direct impact on the level of environmental literacy of Albanian society as a whole.

### Achievements and Progress

The programme related to the development of the Green Pack focused establishing a project team, organising a project launch event and adapting the Green Pack structure to the Albanian situation.

Mission-based visits were organised to institutions and experts on environmental education in Albania. A group of international and Albanian experts participated in a series of meetings with relevant national institutions responsible for environmental protection and public education, as well as representatives of teachers' networks, environmental education groups, environmental NGOs, and sustainable development experts. Discussions focused on programme methodology, the existing structure of the education system in Albania, the structure of the Green Pack, and the identification of important for Albanian environmental topics. Available information sources and past and current programmes were also discussed, along with finding local and national support among different Albanian institutions and organisations.

A project team was established consisting of experts from the region and REC Country Office Albania. Albanian experts from different fields such as education also joined the team.

The Green Pack programme was introduced at a launch event aimed at presenting the Green Pack and relevant regional experiences to Albanian stakeholders. The event also served to gather opinions on the Green Pack from Albanian education experts. The workshop was held in February, 2004 in Tirana. The structure of the Green Pack was adjusted to reflect the results of the meetings and analyses of the existing education system in Albania.

### Preparation of the Green Pack

Efforts during this phase have been largely focused on the draft materials for the Albanian Green Pack, based on outcomes of the consultations mentioned above. The project team is currently working on writing materials for the Green Pack. Parallel to this basic materials from the regional Green Pack (English version) have been translated and adapted to the Albanian Green Pack.

The project team prepared a general information leaflet about the project and the Green Pack, along with a questionnaire about the proposed contents of the Albanian Green Pack. This questionnaire focused on three topics:

- topics to be included in the Albanian Green Pack;
- potential topics to be added specifically for the Albanian Green pack; and
- relevance of Green Pack components within the Albanian education system.

The questionnaire was distributed to 200 key actors such as teachers and educational experts, environmental and educational NGOs, and interested individuals via post, e-mail distribution lists and at meetings with specific stakeholder groups. About 140 questionnaires were filled in. The answers confirmed the relevance of the main proposed topics and the key materials (i.e. the handbook, CD-ROM and video cassette). A few additional topics were proposed.

### *Information Provision*

The environmental information package *Environment Today* is prepared daily. During this phase of the project, 434 daily packages were prepared between November 2004 and January 2005. The topics covered a wide range of environmental issues in Albania and the region. Announcements on events, deadlines, job opportunities, and other themes have been published as well. *Environment Today* is posted daily to the REC Albania website <<http://albania.rec.org>> providing the possibility for a wider access to the environmental information.

*Environment Today* is published monthly. During the period covered, 14 issues were prepared, published and distributed (November 2003, Issue No. 82 – December 2004, Issue No. 95). A total of 300 copies have been printed and distributed to nearly 300 addresses. The recipients of the magazine are mainly environmental institutions, environmental NGOs, interested individuals, environmental authorities, and journalists. The magazine content includes a cover story, a forum, REC activities, information from Albania and the region, coverage of the environmental issues of the country and the region, and other environmental news. Electronic versions of the magazine are posted on the REC Albania website as PDF files.

### **What Comes Next**

The project team and national working group will advice on the main environmental themes to be incorporated, ensuring that the breadth and depth of key issues will be adequately covered. Contributors to the contents of the teacher's handbook will either adapt

existing environmental education materials or develop new material based on national needs.

The exact format of the Green Pack, accompanying instruction manuals and multi-media accessories will only be finalised after the preparatory discussions have taken place. Particularly important is the endorsement of the ministries of environment and/or education, since this will have a particularly important impact on the consequent acceptance and use of the Green Pack. Production of the whole circulation of the Green Pack (2,000 copies) will follow approval and final editing.

In combination with the planned promotional activities and a launch event, schools will be invited to submit a short application to attend training courses on the Green Pack's use. Ten two-day "training for trainers" workshops will be organised in different districts. Educators and educational methodologists, as well as some distinguished teachers, will support and facilitate the workshops.

## **Danube Regional Project (UNDP/GEF)**

### **- Small Grants Component - Access to Information and Public Participation component**

**Donor:** UNDP/GEF

**Amount:** USD 1.5 million in grants;

USD 1.8 million for the Access to Information and Public Participation component

**Duration:** Grants component 2002-2006;

Access to Information and Public Participation component 2004-2006

**Beneficiary countries:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro. Small Grants component also covers: Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine

### **Project Background**

The Danube Regional Project aims to reinforce regional cooperation between the Danube countries and support the development of national policies and legislation, as well as the definition of priority actions for pollution control in order to ensure a common approach to the protection of international waters, the sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity. The support of USD 17 million for this project is actually one of three components of the USD 95 million GEF Strategic Partnership for Nutrient Reduction in the Danube/Black Sea Basin – the Global Environment Facility's largest and perhaps most ambitious water-related project in the world.



From a long-term point of view the Danube Regional Project contributes to sustainable human development in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Ukraine by reinforcing the capacities of participating countries in developing effective mechanisms for regional cooperation and coordination in order to ensure the protection of international waters, sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity.

The following project components are designed to respond to the overall development objective:

- creation of sustainable ecological conditions for land use and water management;
- capacity building and reinforcement of transboundary cooperation for the improvement of water quality and environmental standards in the Danube River Basin;
- strengthening of public involvement in environmental decision making and reinforcement of community actions for pollution reduction and protection of ecosystems; and
- reinforcement of monitoring, evaluation and information systems to control transboundary pollution, and to reduce nutrients and harmful substances.

### *Small Grants*

This granting scheme, a component of the Danube Regional Project, is managed by the REC head office in cooperation with REC offices in nine Danube countries, as well as with regional environmental centres in Ukraine and Moldova. The amount of grants available over four years is estimated at USD 1.5 million.

The programme's goal is to facilitate NGO and stakeholder action at the regional and national levels in addressing point and non-point sources of nutrient and toxic pollution in the Danube basin. It includes a region-wide cooperative granting component and national-level grants in the Danube basin countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

These grants will enable NGOs of the Danube River Basin to manage projects that:

- directly contribute to the reduction of point and non-point sources of pollution;
- contribute to overall improvement of the monitoring system;
- address transboundary and/or national problems present in identified hotspots;
- prevent pollution generation by increasing public awareness;

- facilitate the flow of information;
- assist in the prevention of accidental pollution;
- promote the production and use of phosphate-free detergents and organic fertilisers; and
- aid democratic processes by ensuring public involvement and participation in decisions affecting the environmental quality of the Danube River Basin.

### *Access to Information and Public Participation*

This component is strengthening public access to information and participation at different levels concerning water pollution-related issues in the Danube Basin. At the national level it helps to build the capacities of responsible government authorities of five Danube countries, to provide water-related environmental information to the public and to improve public participation. It also reinforces community involvement in solving water pollution-related issues at selected local hot spots in the Danube River Basin.

Project experience is also used to develop "practical participation tools" that will be disseminated throughout the Danube Basin to assist authorities and various stakeholders in their efforts toward public information and participation.

The project is focused primarily on capacity building for government officials, but will also include citizens, communities and NGOs – specifically through concrete efforts to implement and facilitate access to information and public participation in hotspot areas.

The project activities support the implementation of requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive and other relevant directives and the Aarhus Convention.

## **Achievements and Progress**

### *DRP Small Grants Component*

As part of the first phase of project implementation, 65 projects have been selected through the REC's granting scheme at the national and regional level, involving over 70 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), amounting to almost USD 700,000. Supported projects are being implemented in 11 Danube Basin countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine. Implementation of the selected grants begins in September 2005 and continues until September 2006.

Five of the projects supported are regional in scope, involving NGOs from more than one country. These projects focus on transboundary cooperation, regional networking, stakeholder cooperation, best practices in agriculture and the basin/sub-basin approach to decision making.

The other 60 projects supported are national or local in scope. They take a sectoral approach to reducing nutrient and toxic substance pollution, focusing on:

- agriculture: promoting best available practices (e.g. prevention of soil erosion), fertilisers and pesticide reduction, eco-farming methods and sustainable rural development;
- municipalities: advocating better urban wastewater collection and treatment, constructing reed-bed wastewater treatment plants, promoting better household waste management; and
- industry: promoting best available practices/technologies, environmental management systems, consumer awareness raising and cleaner production.

Many of the supported NGO initiatives address land use issues. NGOs are planting appropriate vegetation, restoring flood-plain forests or abandoned lands, and protecting natural flood plains and wetland habitats. Another common theme is water management and policy, including the Water Framework Directive and the public participation approach to decision making.

### *Access to Information and Public Participation component*

As part of the first phase of the project, national teams have been mobilised, an assessment has been prepared of the current status of public access to water-related information, the main barriers to access to information and public involvement, and needs have been identified to remove barriers and improve the situation.

Sites for pilot demonstration projects (in local water pollution hot spots) are being identified. It is planned to establish and strengthen public access to information and participatory processes in the selected sites at the local level. The established procedures for access to information and public involvement will serve as models for other public participation activities.

Based on the needs identified, most of the Danube Basin countries facing similar problems have proposed working within the project to develop a user-friendly procedure for public access to water-related information, better legal frameworks and criteria for commercial and industrial secrets, and tools for assisting officials to provide information and the public to access information.

### **What Comes Next**

#### *Small Grants*

The REC, through its network, is monitoring the implementation of NGO projects selected during the first round of grants at national and regional levels through 2006. A major criterion for success will be their impact on nutrient and toxic-substance pollution.

As a follow up to the first phase of the project, the second round of grants will start in early summer 2005 and is expected to support the NGO initiatives throughout the Danube River Basin all the way to 2007.

### *Access to Information and Public Participation*

The project team:

- will select and support local stakeholders in developing and implementing access to information and public participation processes for the pilot sites;
- monitor progress and assess the lessons learned regarding access to information and public participation;
- help to develop and implement procedures, guidance materials and tools to improve public access to information and public involvement in the participating countries,
- prepare assessments to support improvements by ICPDR on how public participation and access to information can be improved at the Danube basin level; and
- disseminate the lessons learned to other Danube countries (through websites, publications, regional workshops, media, etc.).

## **Networking of SEE Environmental NGOs**

### **An Overview of Network Activities in Support to REReP**

Vigorous civil society is a precondition for long-term regional stability. Just as there are needs for better cooperation among environmental ministries, there is a need for better cooperation and coordination between environmental NGOs. Since environmental issues are often transboundary in nature, and are widely recognised as a politically neutral issue, they have been employed successfully to elicit cross-border cooperation between countries.

At the first major gathering of environmental NGOs from South Eastern Europe (at the conference Sustainable Development in the Balkans, in June 2000), the participants demonstrated determination to form a regional network and thus strengthen the role of environmental civil society in the region. The network was named the South Eastern European Environmental NGOs Network – SEEENN.

The establishment of the network coincided with another important process in the SEE environment: the launch of the Stability Pact's environmental dimension: the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme. SEE NGOs welcomed this programme and sought to endorse and influence environmental decisions being made under REReP.



The environmental NGOs that participated in the conference addressed a statement to REReP and the Stability Pact as a whole and appointed representatives of NGOs to the REReP Task Force. Environmental NGOs from SEE vowed to form a network, strengthen the role of environmental civil society and to endorse and influence environmental decisions made under the programme. The overall goal of SEEENN is to create a platform for cooperation and information exchange between NGOs in SEE through enhancing public participation regarding the environmental aspect of further development processes in SEE.

### **REReP and Environmental NGOs**

From the status of observers at the initial REReP Ministerial Conference, NGO involvement has grown to the level of full membership in the REReP Task Force – the main body facilitating the implementation of priority REReP components. This involvement allows NGOs to review and monitor progress, to lobby and to introduce new projects into REReP.

The task force meetings have proved to be the best forum for expressing NGO positions and influencing decision-making processes because NGO statements conveying concerns or proposals on any of the issues raised are heard by all SEE and donor countries.

Although providing constant input at the task force meetings, NGO activities on the follow-up of decisions have to be stepped up, and an adequate flow of information to the public in the SEE region remains a challenge for the SEE environmental NGO network. This refers to unexplored possibilities for dialogue with national governments and donors, but mainly to the establishment of functional channels for access to information on NGO and overall activities in REReP. Additionally, one of the core roles of South Eastern European NGOs in REReP is direct project implementation, particularly in the second priority area: support to environmental civil society.

In addition, NGO representatives are found on most REReP project steering committees, as well as those related to policy development issues. In this way NGOs are able to influence project implementation at regional and national levels. The further development of NGO expertise in different areas will logically contribute to greater NGO impact on project structuring and planning.

Nevertheless, there is a lot of space for stronger voicing of relevant concerns from NGOs, which should attempt to address them in a number of ways. Some might include direct dialogue with the Stability Pact and REReP officials, swift reactions to issues relevant to environmental reconstruction, and setting up an NGO monitoring system in each SEE country, which would not only keep a critical eye on the field activities in REReP implementation, but also assess other segments

of institution building and infrastructure investments against environmental goals and targets.

Increasing the public's role in REReP and the integration of environmental considerations into all areas of Stability Pact activities are some of the key tasks for SEEENN that could help highlight the importance of public participation in the processes, as well as in developing solutions and procedures for it.

### **Objectives of SEEENN**

SEEENN aims to create a platform for cooperation and information exchange for NGOs in SEE in order to: strengthen the environmental NGO community in SEE and produce a more coherent environmental movement. This force could act as a partner for cooperation with governmental institutions by assisting the development of a strong environmental movement using the experiences of similar networks worldwide, and ensuring a permanent flow of information between NGOs.

### **Structure of SEEENN**

The foundations of the network are the NGOs in different countries. Its decision-making body is the SEEENN Executive Board, which consists of representatives from the Albanian Chemical Association, Young Researchers of Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Agrolink (Bulgaria), Green Action (Croatia), The Ecologists' Movement of Macedonia, UNESCO Pro Natura (Romania) and Young Researchers of Serbia.

In June 2003, at the Second Regional Conference, 43 member organisations from South Eastern Europe were approved for SEEENN membership. NGOs working in the fields of environment, sustainable development, nature conservation, organic agriculture and interested in development and improvement of regional cooperation were accepted for membership in SEE Environmental NGOs Network. The SEEENN Secretariat offices are in Zagreb (Green Action) and Belgrade (Young Researchers of Serbia).

In order to address the lack of experience of NGOs in networking (significant weakness of civil society in SEE during the last decade), an Advisory Committee was established. The network benefits from advice received from established networks and organisations working with civil society in the region. The Advisory Committee consists of the REC, Friends of the Earth Europe, Mileukontakt Oost Europa, Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke (South East European Youth Network), Arc-turos (Balkan Net Network for the Conservation of Large Carnivores in the Balkans), Heinrich Boell Stiftung and CEE Bankwatch.

The decision-making body of the SEEENN Executive Board consists of seven representatives: Sveta Nikolova of Agrolink (Bulgaria), Elda Marku of the Albanian Chemical Association (Albania), Jelena

Beronja of the Young Researchers of Serbia (Serbia and Montenegro), Miodrag Dakic of the Young Researchers of Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Peter Lengyel from UNESCO ProNatura (Romania), Stefan Orizovic of the Ecologists' Movement of Macedonia (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and Tomislav Tomasevic of Green Action (Croatia).

## Main Activities

### *Regional SEEENN Conferences – SEE Environmental NGO Gatherings*

The First Regional Conference took place on February, 2002 in Stubike Toplice, Croatia. It was attended by 75 participants from 35 Balkan environmental NGOs and European international organisations. Participants discussed the state of the environment in the Balkans, priority issues, joint activities, and the development of SEEENN. At the end they adopted a Conference Statement.

A document describing SEEENN's structure was agreed to during the first SEEENN conference. The first Executive Board of SEEENN was elected, which strengthened the geographical representation of SEE NGOs.

The secretariat prepared an NGO report for the Fourth REReP Task Force meeting and organised NGO participation. The meeting took place on April 19, 2002 in Brussels. Participants used the opportunity to participate in Green Week events and represent SEEENN. A report of the meeting was prepared and delivered to the environmental NGOs from South Eastern Europe through the SEEENN and other relevant mailing lists and websites.

The Second Regional Conference took place on June, 2003 in Belgrade. The conference was attended by 45 participants from Balkan environmental NGOs and European international organisations. Participants gave clear directions for developing SEEENN and

defined its activities for the next three years, as well as NGO involvement in REReP and the Stability Pact. NGO cooperation on priority environmental issues in the region was strengthened. Documents about SEEENN's structure, statutes and the improvement of the Executive Board were agreed.

### *Regional Issue Oriented Meetings: Biodiversity; Energy; Agriculture*

The first issue-oriented meeting took place on April, 2002 in Palic, Serbia and Montenegro. The Biodiversity Conference was attended by 34 participants from 23 Balkan NGOs, as well as representatives of Balkan Net, WWF and the REC. The participants adopted recommendations concerning biodiversity conservation in SEE.

Three thousand leaflets in were produced to promote SEEENN, along with 100 T-shirts. Materials are being distributed in all seven participating countries and delivered to many other institutions and organisations.

The second issue-oriented meeting took place on December, 2002 in Ohrid, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Twenty-five participants from eight SEE countries (including Slovenia) exchanged experience and information on organic agriculture and developed partnerships. The participants defined the obstacles inhibiting organic agriculture, and proposed measures to strengthen their activities.

The third issue-oriented meeting took place from February 27 to March 2 in Rijeka, Croatia. Sixteen participants from seven SEE countries exchanged experience and information and developed partnerships on energy issues. Participants worked in three working groups: Practical Solutions and Cooperation, Advocacy and Cooperation, and Media.

## SEEENN SEEKS

- that the government and civil societies of the countries in the Balkans should have an equal say with international and donor organisations in setting up the development processes and Stability Pact priorities and project areas; and
- transparency, pro-active information and real involvement of civil society in the planning and decision-making of the Stability Pact, according to the Aarhus Convention.

### **The environment should be placed high on the political agenda through:**

- an increased share of environmental concerns in the overall Stability Pact package;
- high regard for environmental concerns in all Stability Pact projects particularly infrastructure investments;
- strategic planning of transport infrastructure development projects for the entire region, and strategic environment assessment of those plans;
- shift of focus from large-scale infrastructure investment loans to grants and micro-credits beneficial for local people and the environment; and
- implementation of Stability Pact projects with maximum use of local expertise and implementing capacities, as a significant contribution to the development of the region in its own right.

### *Preparation of SEEENN Project Proposals*

Three projects ideas, brainstormed during the workshops of the First Regional Conference, were developed for the GTZ call for proposals for cooperative projects by SEEENN member NGOs and passed the selection process. The secretariat is in permanent communication and supports the realisation of the projects.

### *Coordinating NGO Involvement in REReP*

A report on the activities completed between task force meetings was prepared and presented at the Third REReP Task Force Meeting, which took place in Sarajevo September, 2001; at the Fourth REReP TF Meeting in Brussels on April 19, 2002; at the Fifth REReP TF Meeting in Tirana on January, 2003; at the Sixth REReP TF Meeting in Brussels on November 2003; and at the Seventh REReP TF Meeting in Belgrade, on September 30 – October 1, 2004.

SEEENN is participating in the Regional Environmental Press Center Steering Committee, SEE Electronic Networking and in the GTZ Project Committee, both REReP “priority area 2” projects. Also, the secretariat and executive board are assisting the planning or

implementation of REReP projects in other priority areas, wherever necessary.

SEEENN has been participating in the European Union NGO Dialogue since September 2002, and in the Environment and Security Initiative for South Eastern Europe and Central Asia run by UNEP, UNDP and OSCE.

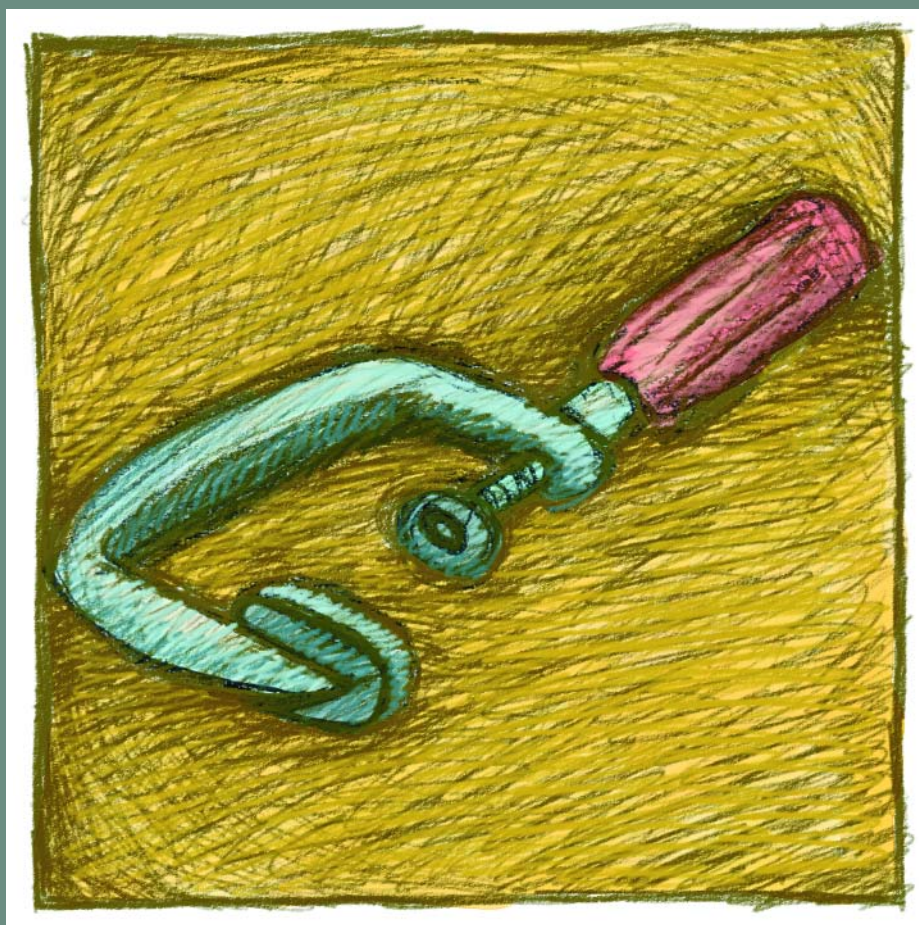
### *Network Promotion*

SEEENN bulletins, with editions in English and in the six languages of the region (Albanian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Macedonian, Romanian and Serbian), and an editorial board of more than 25 members from nine countries, aims to contribute to better information concerning the SEE environmental civil society as well as the transparency of SEEENN activities. Two issues have been published, with more than 5,000 copies distributed and more than 60 articles in print.

### *Environmental Summer School for SEEEN Youth*

A website was created to give SEE NGOs the opportunity to discuss and find new information about environmental issues <[www.seeenn.org.mk](http://www.seeenn.org.mk)>.





## Support to Environmental Regional Cooperation Mechanisms and Cross-Border Projects





# Support to Environmental Regional Cooperation Mechanisms and Cross-Border Projects

The promotion of regional cooperation, including cross-border initiatives, is at the heart of the REReP concept. It is a catalyst for establishing trust, overcoming the legacy of war and promoting peace; all REReP activities and projects are based on this understanding.

The countries of the region have identified cross-border cooperation as a priority area and have taken further steps to enhance it. The current developments are based on the Joint Statement<sup>1</sup> of the Skopje Ministerial Meeting of October 2003, the decision taken at the Sixth REReP meeting in 2003 and the recommendations made in the external independent review of REReP. With the support of the government of Norway, ministers of environment of the SAP countries met to discuss the progress achieved, identify common problems in the implementation of the SAP and to propose priorities of high interest for the region for future assistance within the SAP. Senior officials met to exchange information, views and experience on the current status of cross-border cooperation, as well as to define priorities and needs. They also presented and selected specific cross-border project ideas for further development and implementation.

As a result, environmental, regional and cross-border cooperation has changed much since REReP began five years ago. The region is now more politically stable and the major unifying aim for the countries is the common goal of European integration. "Before REReP there were almost no relations between the countries of the Balkan region," claimed Gordana Kozuharova, REReP Task Force member from the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia at the Seventh REReP Task Force meeting in Belgrade. "Of all the Stability Pact fields, it was the environment that crossed the borders first."

The number of cross-border memoranda of understanding, agreements and initiatives has rapidly increased. More and more specific projects and cross border activities are carried out successfully in the region, using a variety of instruments, models and approaches for joint work. Cross-border projects are focused on resolving concrete problems; they are now more process than resource oriented, with clear agreement on rules and procedures to be adopted. These efforts have led to an improved level of communication among project partners and stakeholders, better cooperation, local ownership and commitment.

Environmental cooperation is indispensable when it comes to sustainable management of shared natural resources. It has created mutual trust and established long-term horizons while developing a routine of cooperation. Environmental cooperation has been particularly successful in the protection of shared natural sites, such as the cross-border water management of the Sava, Drina, Neretva and Danube rivers, as well as of the joint natural resources Stara Planina and Shkoder Lake.<sup>2</sup> Ohrid and Prespa lakes are already proven examples of successful cross-border cooperation in environmental issues.

## Facilitation of Cross-Border Cooperation in South Eastern Europe

**Donor:** Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

**Amount:** EUR 162,290

**Duration:** January – April 2005

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration)

## Project Background

During the second meeting of the REReP Task Force in November 2000, the countries agreed that the negotiation and signing of cross-border cooperation agreements between countries could facilitate such joint work. This project is designed to facilitate the process of reaching international cooperation between the neighbouring SEE countries. It sought to foster an appreciation of the value added through cooperation with neighbouring countries in the field of environment and establishes dialogue among SEE countries and territories.

The activities of the project facilitated the process of neighbouring countries working together in solving domestic and regional environmental problems through REReP. They helped the countries of SEE understand the importance of cooperating with neighbouring countries to solve shared environmental problems and define the scope and implementation modalities of the cross-border projects.

## Achievements and Progress

A ministerial meeting on progress achieved within the Stabilisation and Association Process took place in October 2003 in Skopje. Ministers of environment met to discuss the progress achieved, identify common problems in the implementation of the SAP and to propose priorities of high interest for the region for future assistance within the SAP. They adopted a Joint Statement<sup>3</sup> that identified the areas for regional cross-border cooperation and assistance. The ministers and heads of delegations confirmed their readiness and ambition to reach the environmental standards of the European Union, recognising that natural resources and the environment are important capital and represent economic categories.

In the Joint Statement, the CARDS Programme is recognised as an important mechanism for technical assistance. The ministers stated that more environmental investment projects have to be attracted to the region and respective additional programmes are needed, as was the case with the EU candidate countries. The ministers and heads of delegations called upon the European Commission, donor countries, international organisations and institutions to mobilise additional resources to assist the successful implementation of the environmental obligations within the SAP, following the pattern established for the new EU member states.

Areas for regional cross-border cooperation and assistance discussed at the ministerial meeting in Skopje, May 2003 include:

- the process of approximation of legislation and strengthening environmental institutions, including local authorities;
- joint work on environmental enforcement and compliance, particularly the implementation of the IPPC and Seveso II directives;
- efforts for promoting the implementation of the EIA/SEA directives of the EU, including EIA in a transboundary context (Espoo Convention);
- preparatory activities for the implementation of heavy-investment directives;
- sustainable and integrated management of water resources based on the EU Water Framework Directive and related directives;
- preparatory activities for the Framework Directive on Waste and related directives;
- efforts for strengthening civil society and implementing the principles of the Aarhus Convention, as reflected in the relevant directives;
- development and introduction of economic instruments;

- establishing a common market for environmentally friendly technologies, renewable energy and cleaner technologies, introducing EMAS and ISO 14000;
- environmental education;
- protection of biological and landscape diversity, including the promotion of sustainable tourism;
- integration of environmental concerns into other sectors (e.g. sustainable transport and agriculture), including addressing adequately environmental health issues.

To implement the decisions from the Skopje meeting, a Meeting of Senior Officials on Cross-Border Cooperation in Stabilisation and Association Process Countries took place in Belgrade in May, 2004. During the meeting, the Joint Statement of the Ministers of the Environment and Heads of Delegations on the Progress Achieved within the Stabilisation and Association Process, and the discussion at the 6th REReP Task Force meeting were recalled. Moreover, the status of formal instruments for cross-border cooperation and selected cross-border initiatives and projects under implementation were presented. Senior officials presented the existing and planned cross-border initiatives and projects, reported on their progress, and identified obstacles and fields where assistance is needed to foster them. They adopted conclusions<sup>4</sup> outlining the steps that need to be taken in order to further develop cross-border cooperation in the region, which include the following:

- Make more human and financial resources available to increase the capacity of the relevant institutions.
- Identify the joint environmental priorities of the countries.
- Improve the management structures for project implementation.
- Train the staff of all relevant institutions on central and local levels.
- Improve the information and expertise exchange between relevant institutions in a coordinated manner.
- Encourage and support local initiatives for cross border cooperation through increased financial assistance.

The SEE Senior Officials asked the REC, in its capacity as REReP Secretariat, to organise a follow-up meeting on cross-border project preparation immediately before the REReP Task Force meeting. The meeting was held in Belgrade in September 2004, prior to the Seventh Meeting of the REReP Task Force. Senior officials from Bulgaria and Romania were also invited to take part. New developments in

## LESSONS LEARNED ON CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

(as presented at the 7th Task Force meeting by the REReP TF members)

- Environment is a particularly suitable platform for cross-border cooperation.
- Cross-border projects should be focused on resolving concrete problems; they should be rather process- than resource-oriented, with clear agreement on rules and procedures to be adopted.
- Good will to cooperate, local ownership and commitment are vital preconditions for success; trust building measures have to be implemented.
- A good level of communication among project partners and stakeholders should be kept to raise awareness about cross-border cooperation.

environmental cross-border cooperation were presented with special emphasis on the EU's New Neighbourhood Policy and its new financial instrument. The development of the Joint Project Document between Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was presented as a case study. Senior officials from Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration) presented specific project ideas for cross-border and regional cooperation. They agreed on the criteria for selection and categorisation, and project ideas were discussed one by one. The conclusions and outcomes of both meetings, including the selection of project ideas, were presented at the 7th REReP Task Force meeting.<sup>5</sup>

A sub-regional cross-border meeting on Environmental Protection as a Neutral Platform for Reconciliation, Cooperation and Stability took place on March 10, 2005 in Milocer, Serbia and Montenegro. The Minister of Environment and Physical Planning of the Republic of Montenegro, the Federal Minister of Urban Planning and Environment of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, senior officials from the Republic of Montenegro, Croatia, the Republic of Srpska, representatives of the European Commission, Italy, the Netherlands, Japan, the European Agency for Reconstruction, USAID, UNESCO, IUCN, UNEP, UNDP, GTZ, IRD, OSCE and the Council of Europe met to discuss the status of cross-border cooperation between the Republic of Montenegro and neighbouring countries. The participants adopted meeting conclusions<sup>6</sup> summarising basic points of the presentations and discussions.

## Promotion of Cross-Border Cooperation, Networking and Exchanges in South Eastern Europe

**Donor:** Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

**Amount:** First and Second phases CHF 3,000,000 (EUR 1,950,000); Third phase CHF 1,960,000 (EUR 1,270,000)

**Duration:** First phase, July 2000 – January 2002; Second phase: February 2002 – February 2004; Third phase: March 2004 – December 2006

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro

### Project Background

Nature protection and management are themes particularly well adapted to the promotion of exchanges between SEE countries. They provide grounds for collaboration by bridging ethnic and religious differences and developing civil society. Three pilot cross-border sites of high conservation significance, located in marginal regions with low economic development, have been selected: the Neretva Delta (Ramsar site), shared by Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia; Shkoder Lake (Ramsar site), shared by Albania, and Serbia and Montenegro; and West Stara Planina, shared by Bulgaria, and Serbia and Montenegro.

The goal of the project is to enhance cooperation between SEE countries through the management of shared natural resources. This was the first project to be implemented in South Eastern Europe following the endorsement of REReP and the list of priority projects.

The first and second project phases were successfully accomplished. The activities carried out by the end of 2002 are described in *Highlights of the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe*, published in 2003. The third project phase started in March 2004. It focuses on implementation of the five-year strategic plans for 2004-2008 and the two-year action plans for 2004-2005 for each of the sites, and covers such project activities as information exchange, capacity building, promoting sustainable agriculture, developing eco-tourism, support for environmental education and raising public awareness.

### Achievements and Progress

During 2003 the REC initiated a region-wide and cross-border planning process to provide a framework for priority setting, project implementation and coordination at the cross-border level. Three documents with the title Strategic Plan 2004-2008 (one for each site) were prepared and presented at the 6th REReP Task Force meeting in October 2003. Strategic plans and

action plans for 2004 and 2005 for each of the sites were developed, based on the synthesis and diagnosis carried out in consultation with key national and local partners. The planning process involved representatives of the ministries of environment from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Serbia and Montenegro, as well as active NGO partners, resource persons and key partners. The local bilateral forums established in the previous phases for the three sites have been involved in the process of providing input to project planning and avoiding overlapping of activities. This approach contributed to building local capacity and led to a better understanding of their responsibilities. It also resulted in broad acceptance and ownership of the results, and has developed long-lasting trust and confidence between the neighbour countries.

### *Shkoder Lake*

The overall goal of the Shkoder Lake site, as stated in the strategic plan, is: sustainable use of shared natural and cultural resources of Shkoder Lake as a contribution to local economy via development and implementation of selected elements of the cross-border management plan.

Based on the training in LEAP preparation, held in the previous phase, the development of local environmental action plans for two municipalities connected with Cetinje Lake (Montenegro) and Shkodra (Albania) started in 2004. The process brought together a diverse group of stakeholders: NGO representatives, leaders of business and academic communities, representatives from local municipalities connected with the lake (Podgorica, Cetinje and Bar in Montenegro), and representatives of Shkodra region (Albania), following the same methodology and approach.

Training in project cycle management was carried out to strengthen the ability of local stakeholders to start preparing projects in their own institutions/organisations, to increase individual and group skills that will enable them to work as team members, to organise and assume leadership roles, and to foster coordination and communication between the different sectors.

Twenty-five journalists from national and local media (TV, radio, newspapers, and electronic media) from the two countries, covering mainly environmental topics, were brought together for a media training workshop to improve cross-border coverage of Shkoder Lake, to improve contacts and links, and to prepare the basis for a journalist network to cover environmental issues and developments in the Shkoder Lake region.

Workshops for teachers were held in both Albania and Montenegro, with the purpose of exploring the possibilities for involvement of environmental topics in the existing curriculum. The workshops were prepared in cooperation with the ministers of education in both countries, and with educators and teachers from the region (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia) who presented the ongoing educational reforms in their countries. Participants were not only biology teachers, but teachers of the other subjects, such as: geography, art, chemistry, languages and literature. Kindergarten teachers also took part. Since environmental topics are not strictly connected with biology, this was shown as a good approach to defining the priorities and position of environment in the educational system of the country.

### **'People to People' Approach**

Joint field trips, together with the art exhibition, were organised for Albanian children. Awareness

## MAIN PARTNERS

**Focal points:** As ministry staff members, they play an intermediary role between the projects and authorities they represent, and largely contribute to installing and intensifying dialog both within the country and across the border.

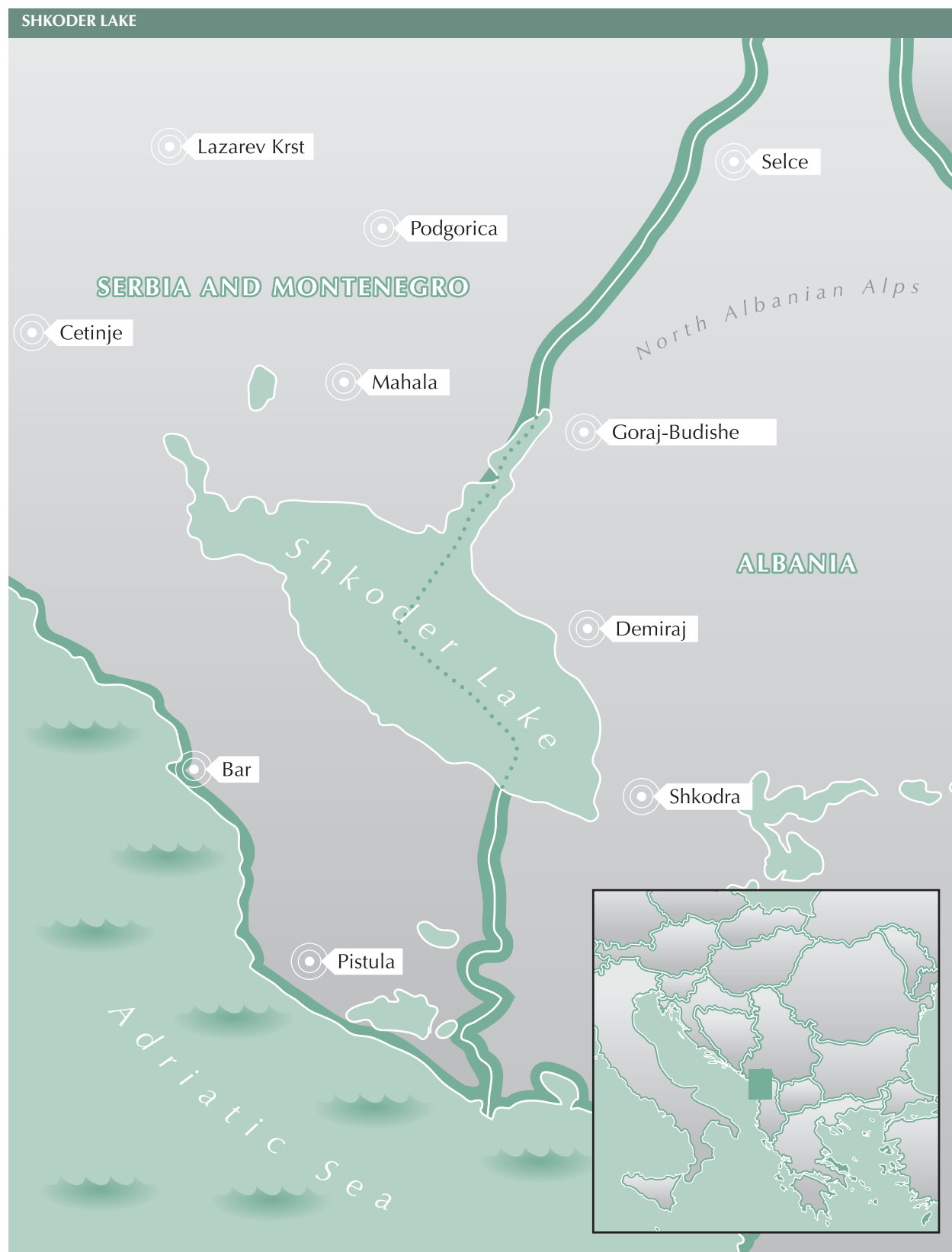
**Ministry for Environmental Protection and Spatial Planning:** In general, cooperation with governmental institutions and respect for the REC's basic principles (neutrality, discretion and support to the political, legislative and statutory efforts of the government) is very important — especially in countries with frequent political changes, such as both Montenegro and Albania.

**Local authorities:** Although their responsibilities are not as large as those within current state systems, they should play an important part in LEAP preparation for Shkoder Lake.

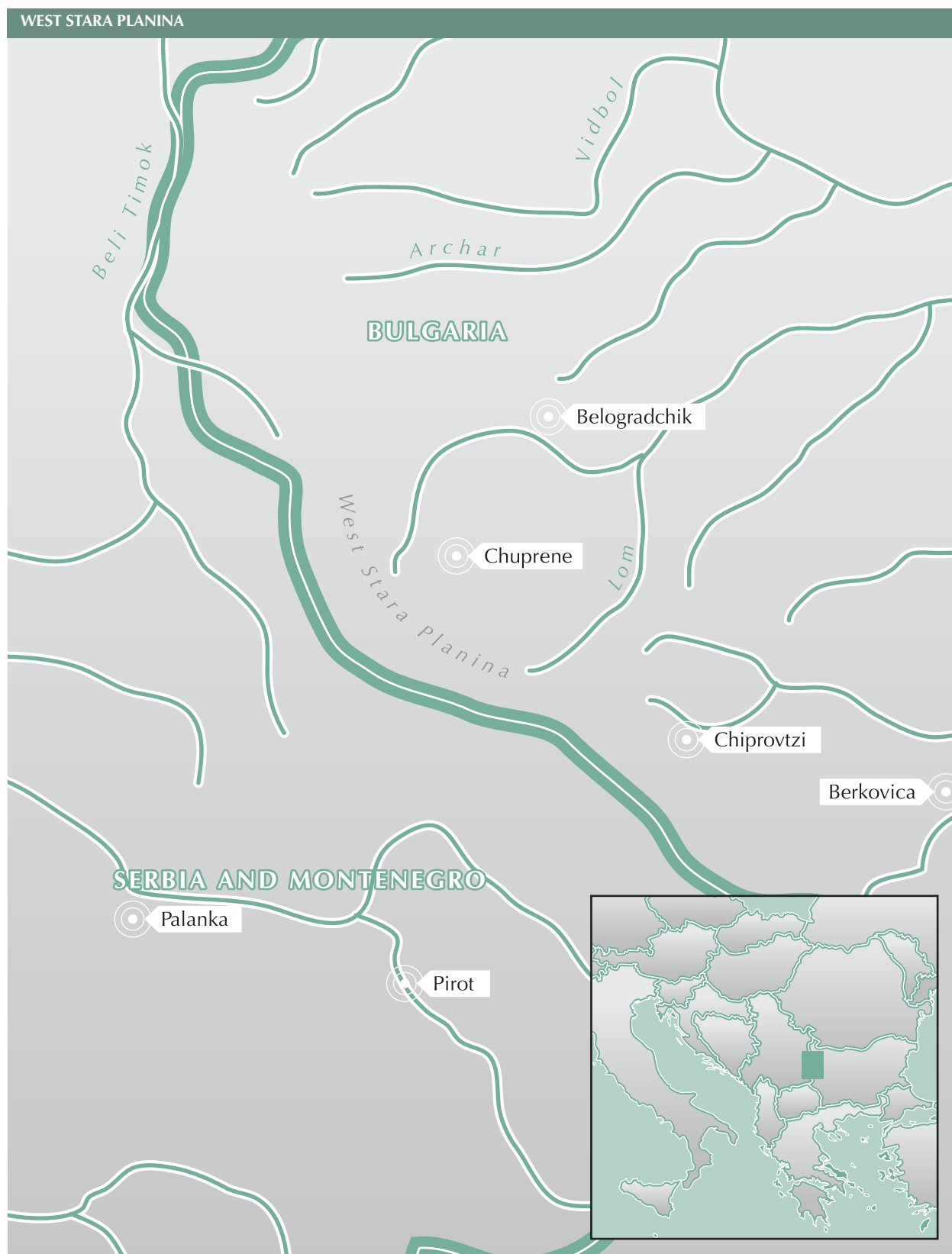
**Management authorities:** National Park Shkoder Lake/REA. Good cooperation with different sectors in the park/REA has already been established through numerous activities, such as forums, technical support, training, study trips and planning processes.

**NGOs:** Several NGOs are now recognised as important stakeholders for future intervention in the region — e.g. Centre for Bird Protection and Research.

**Education sector:** The education sector plays a special role in project implementation. Apart from involving university experts in different project activities (studies), primary and secondary schools appear to be very interested partners — not only for cross-border contacts, but also for different awareness building activities. Additionally, it is an inevitable partner for integrating environmental and ecological issues into curricula.









about the importance of the environmental topics in the curriculum was raised, especially among the ministry staff in charge of educational reforms. New educational materials (Green Pack) were presented and proposed to the ministers of education, and teachers' environmental educational skills were improved. Connections between teachers within the region were also established (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro).

### Publicity

Three issues of a local newsletter were published in six months (200 copies each) and distributed mainly to local and national organisations and institutions. Local-language newsletters are published every two months in order to inform the local community about the progress of project activities. Moreover, they provide a platform for communicating relevant environmental issues, trends, and ongoing activities (apart from our project) with the general public. As a result, different target groups are informed about project programmes and achievements, and the international community takes greater interest in the Shkodra Lake site. Local stakeholders are regularly informed about project advancement, and local community interest is raised for the project and specific activities. A website for Shkodra Lake was also launched, at [www.skadarlake.org](http://www.skadarlake.org). The trilingual *Bulletin* is published twice per year, summarising project achievements, together with statements from local stakeholders as the project beneficiaries. Radio Cetinje has initiated a regular broadcast named "Green Way" to focus especially on environmental issues – including LEAP development.

Cetinje Municipality (Montenegro) provided an office for the purposes of LEAP preparation, and the project provided the necessary office equipment (computer, phone, fax and printer). Moreover, the municipality decided to open a new working position for a LEAP coordinator. In this way the project contributed to opening a new working space, and is based on willingness of the municipality to continue with the activities of this office – even after the LEAP is prepared – in

order to work more intensively on solving environmental issues and problems.

The third bilateral Shkodra Lake Forum was organised in Shkodra, Albania. A significant part of the meeting was dedicated to legal protection of the Albanian part of the lake.

### West Stara Planina

The overall goal of the West Stara Planina site, as stated in the Strategic Plan, is to support and implement activities leading to effective cross-border management of natural resources.

The objectives are to support and implement activities leading to effective cross-border management of natural resources and to empower local stakeholders to improve their well being through support and promotion of environmentally friendly tourism, agriculture and traditional crafts.

### Selected Activities

The activities in West Stara Planina are targeted at establishing sustainable partnerships and training knowledgeable stakeholders for the joint management of shared nature. Several studies were conducted – e.g. a socio-economic study, studies on priority species and habitats, forestry practices, and water resources – and a joint biodiversity database was developed to identify common problems in the area. Activities leading to effective cross-border management of natural resources through promotion of an environmentally friendly tourism, agriculture and traditional crafts were supported. The Bulgarian stakeholders are leaders in ecotourism activities because of their greater experience, national policy developments and available good practices. The Serbian stakeholders are gaining knowledge from Bulgaria and starting to develop similar initiatives. For their part, they are leaders in environmentally friendly agriculture, due to their stronger experience and higher number of initiatives. Bulgarian stakeholders are following the process and learning from Serbia.

Two framework documents are being developed: Regional Ecotourism Action Plan for Bulgaria; and Directions towards Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Area of WSP for Serbia, based on the conclusions from the Transboundary Roundtables on Ecotourism and Agriculture of the forum meeting in Pirot in October 2004. Concrete results include: establishment of regional working groups on environmentally friendly tourism and agriculture; preparation of joint strategic directions for tourism and agriculture in both countries; and preparation of local environmental action programmes for all four municipalities in Serbia (for Zajecar, Pirot, Knjazevac and Dimitrovgrad).

The development of LEAPs for four municipalities in Serbia started with the active participation of local

### MUNICIPAL AGREEMENT

Several meetings were held with the high officials of the Cetinje Municipality (e.g. the mayor and the deputy mayor for communication with international organisations) in order to agree on details of the LEAP preparation and development. The official agreement between Cetinje and the REC was signed on December 13, 2004 in Cetinje. According to the agreement, the LEAP should be prepared by the end of 2005, and the municipality will provide all necessary support for its development.

## MAIN PARTNERS

**National level institutions:** Capacity building and knowledge transfer related to environmentally friendly tourism, agriculture and traditional crafts

**Other donors:** Soliciting additional support to local initiatives beyond the REC's capacity to address

**Small businesses:** Developing economic activities in the domains of environmentally friendly tourism, agriculture and traditional crafts

**Municipalities:** Facilitating the creation of partnerships between small businesses and NGOs, and creating an institutional context favourable to the development of environmentally friendly tourism, agriculture and traditional crafts

**NGO Network:** Linking groups, associations and NGOs in the context of promoting of environmentally friendly tourism, agriculture and traditional crafts

**Teachers' network:** Environmental education and awareness raising activities with schools

**Media network:** Public awareness raising and dissemination of key information and news about REC project staff and SDC Switzerland

stakeholders. The lessons learned from development of a LEAP for Belogradchik (Bulgaria) were shared. The project activities reflect: the willingness of municipalities to formalise their cooperation; the ongoing procedure for establishing a nature park on the Bulgarian side and the future opportunities for a transboundary park; and the ongoing procedure of establishing a biosphere reserve on the Serbian side, restructuring the biosphere reserve on the Bulgarian side and the future opportunity for a transboundary biosphere reserve.

The project supports an awareness raising campaign for the establishment of a nature park on the Bulgarian side, with financial support from the Ministry of Environment and Waters. To initiate negotiations on the transboundary biosphere reserve and raise the profile of the region, the project sought the assistance of the national Man and the Biosphere (MAB) committee of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Reserve programme.

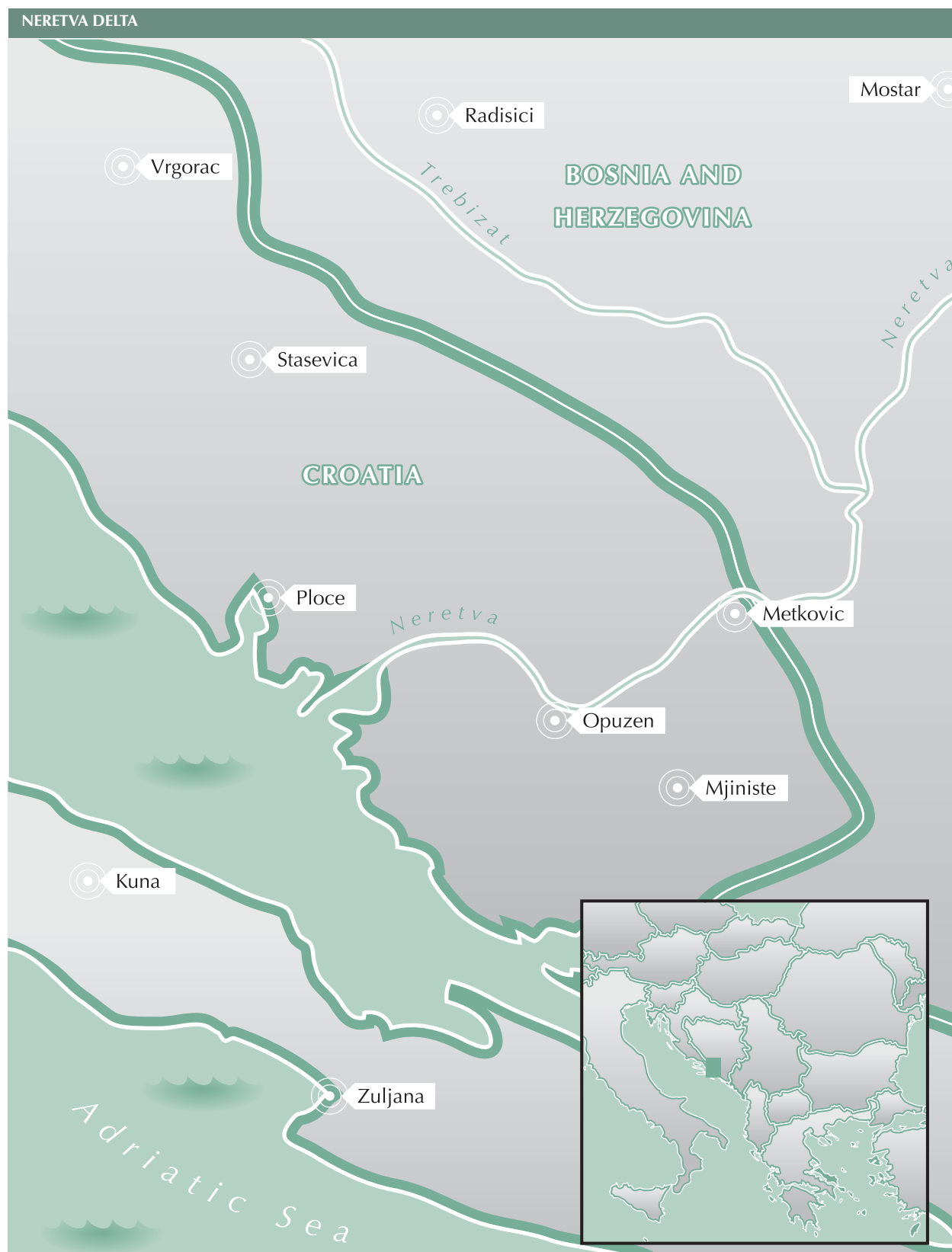
### 'People to People' Approach

The Bulgarian-Serbian festival "Old Mountain: New Bridges" took place in Pirot in October 2004. It will become a bilateral traditional celebration and platform for transboundary dialogue. Within the framework of the festival, the following three roundtables were held (amid performances by children from Bulgaria and Serbia): environmentally friendly tourism; agriculture; and a mayors' roundtable. The eleven mayors from Bulgaria and Serbia and Montenegro – Belogradchik, Berkovitz, Vurshetz, Georgi Damianovo, Godech, Chiprovtsi, Chuprene, Dimitrovgrad, Zajecar, Knjazevac and Pirot – discussed the achievements and future priorities for the development of the West Stara Planina region. Following the discussions, the mayors signed a forum protocol, which focuses on identifying members of targeted

working groups on priorities for cooperation (environmentally friendly tourism and agriculture), and aims to apply jointly for projects under the Neighbourhood Programme of the European Commission and other international programmes.

The Second Regional Fair of Balkan Agrobiodiversity and Rural Heritage gathered together a host of local beekeepers' associations, representatives of agriculture, scientific, educational and research institutes and rural development organisations, craft makers, folk musicians and dance groups. An exhibition of more than 20 indigenous Balkan breeds was staged. The indigenous breeds proved to be a good symbol of cross-border activity because a number of them are common to several SEE countries. Of particular interest was the demonstration of Bulgarian (Chiprovci) and Serbian (Pirot) carpeting techniques. This event was accepted by local residents as a chance to promote their cultural heritage (crafts, music) and typical local products based on Balkan indigenous farm animal breeds. The fair was organised by the REC; the Sector for Genetic Resources of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management; and the Natura Balkanika Nature Society from Dimitrovgrad.

The REC cooperated with Save Agricultural Varieties of Europe (SAVE) and a local partner from Dimitrovgrad on the workshop Rare Breeds of the Balkans. Participants included representatives from SEE countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro) as well as Austria, Slovenia, Switzerland, and Turkey. The workshop was the initial step in establishing a Balkan experts' network for conserving the Balkan agrobiodiversity heritage.



## INTERACTIVE FARM

The Interactive farm project is implemented by the Natura Balkanika Nature Society from Dimitrovgrad, and financially supported by the REC and the EuropeAid-EC Office in Serbia and Montenegro. The farm will promote the values of Balkan agro-genetic resources and rural heritage, and support the sustainable development of marginalised rural areas in Serbia and Montenegro. The farm features a unique collection of indigenous Balkan breeds of farm animals; farm shop/direct marketing; a playground; traditional cuisine; an ethno-museum room with lodging capacity, and an education programme. The farm has seven indigenous breeds at the moment: the East European pony; Balkan donkey; Balkan goat; Bardoka/Kosova jackal; Mangalitza pig; Svrlijig hen; and Karakachan dog. A special role will be given to the promotion and valorisation of typical local products produced on the basis of local autochthonous breeds and traditional technologies such as wool crafts, carpets, milk products, domestic cosmetics (traditional soap), as well as pottery; honey; fruits and vegetables; and medicinal plants.

The farm possesses a facility for special crafts, mangulitza meat processing (smoking) and a small dairy for traditional sheep and goat milk products. Part of the farm's facilities will be used for training that emphasises values, the importance and advantages of traditional heritage, farm animal safety and natural nutrition aimed at improving urban children's knowledge and opinion of rural life. A small-scale agro-tourism programme (shop gallery, demonstration of traditional craft techniques, food products, and lodging) will offer the possibility of additional income to a few rural families around the farm. The project has already attracted a high level of interest of local and national media.

*Neretva Delta*

The overall goal of the Neretva Delta site project, as stated in the Strategic Plan, is to contribute to the creation of conditions for integrated management of the Neretva Delta.

The two local site offices (Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Metkovich, Croatia) are acting as competence centres that are able to coordinate the efforts of different international programmes, provide a platform for information exchange, and voice the problems of stakeholders.

A thematic user-friendly map has been drawn up, based on current land use plans for the situation of Neretva Delta in both countries. They illustrate the existing challenges in Neretva Delta, and an open discussion of possibilities for future action is being prepared. The maps contain information about natural, historical and cultural heritage. The map was updated with current information about bird life in Neretva Delta.

Information on the project, including its goals and activities, was disseminated to stakeholders. The information gathered is organised in a database containing the contact details and interests of all relevant stakeholders. This includes scientific institutions, authorities, state agencies, NGOs, schools and kindergartens. Protected areas are used to formulate directions for sustainable development of Neretva Delta. Local stakeholders and key national institutions are providing input for updating the existing databases about flora and fauna in the protected areas (e.g. the Croatian Institute of Ornithology, the Institute for Nature Protection in Zagreb and Sarajevo, the Cantonal Ministry of Environment of Mostar, the Croatian Ministry of Culture, Dubrovnik County and cantonal representatives from Mostar).

Training to introduce sustainable development principles to local stakeholders was organised for representatives of local and cantonal authorities, tourist agencies, private business, farmers, NGOs, educational institutions, development and consultancy agencies, public companies and international organisations from both countries.

Training in sustainable agriculture: on Challenges and Possibilities for Development in the Neretva Delta was organised to explore environmentally friendly agricultural methods that can be practiced by Neretva Delta farmers. The workshop considered the economic consequences of shifting from traditional to organic agriculture, and was set up to analyse possibilities in the cross-border region and to match them with those from rural tourism. In addition, the influence on human health of both traditional and organic agricultural methods was considered. Fifty people from the cantonal ministries of environment, cantonal ministries of agriculture, NGOs, local farmers, academic institutions, experts, small business and other stakeholders from both countries attended the workshop. As a result, stakeholder networking and coordination in the field of agriculture in the Neretva region was extended.

A joint network of local teachers was established to improve education on environmental issues in schools in both countries, and to implement new practices related to the specific environmental problems of their shared natural resources. A workshop was organised in Metkovic, Croatia in December 2003. Participants included kindergarten teachers, primary and secondary school teachers, representatives of the ministries of education from both countries, representatives of the University of Mostar, representatives of local communities and counties, students and journalists. A teacher's manual was presented and distributed to all participants.

An eco-path with interactive elements for school-children was developed in Hutovo Blato Nature Park (Bosnia and Herzegovina). Interactive education modules were also added to the ornithological collection in the City Culture Centre in Metkovic, Croatia.

## MAIN PARTNERS

**Relevant governmental organisations:** Ministries (Environment, Agriculture, Tourism) in both countries and at all levels (cantonal, federal, national), as well as Croatian Waters, Public Enterprise for Water Management of the Neretva River basin (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Public Enterprise Nature Park "Hutovo Blato" (Bosnia and Herzegovina), etc.

**Tourist companies:** County Tourist Board in Dubrovnik, Tourist Office Metkovic (Croatia), Tourist Office Capljina (Bosnia and Herzegovina), etc.

**Experts and consultants:** independent experts and consultants from Neretva Delta, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia or, if needed, from abroad.

**Local NGOs:** Several NGOs from both countries are now recognised as important stakeholders for future intervention in the region – e.g. Ljepa Nasha, which has branches in both countries.

**Scientific and educational community:** University of Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Dzemal Bijedic University (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Faculty of Science (Zagreb) and a newly established network of more than 15 schools in the Neretva Delta.

The project team produced informational materials and conducted an environmental awareness campaign in schools. A guide for identifying birds in the Neretva Delta was developed for local pupils with the assistance of NGOs from the region.

The main aim of the Neretva Delta Forum is to increase cooperation and dialogue among groups and institutions in both countries and to promote the idea of shared responsibility for protection of the Delta. There are two levels: the Neretva Delta Forum at the country level, and the steering committee at the cross-border level. The steering committee has eight members, all appointed by the Neretva Delta Forum. Members include representatives of the Ministry of Environment from Bosnia and Herzegovina, representatives of Dubrovnik Neretva County, municipal officials, NGO members, educators, tourism workers, farmers and water management authorities.

The Transboundary Neretva Delta Forum was held in July 2004. The transboundary meeting was held in Hutovo Blato Nature Park, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and covered three pressing issues in the Neretva Delta: current projects in the Neretva Delta and their coordination; development of the water management project in Eastern Herzegovina and its influences on the Neretva Delta; and tourism development in the delta. There were thirty participants representing ministries and local authorities, universities, public enterprises, Hutovo Blato Nature Park, tourism organisations and NGOs. The forum had special guests from the Hydro Power Plants company on the Trebisnjica River, who presented current activities and future development plans for their Upper Horizons project. Cooperation was established with the Neretva Delta Ramsar Convention Committee.

### “People to People” Approach

Joint cultural events were organised, such as Hutovo Blato Day (May 12), to develop partnerships for organising and exchanges between schools and NGOs from

both countries – e.g. the School in Nature (organised by Lijepa Nasa NGO, in Buna, Capljina, Metkovic, Ploce and all Neretva Delta schools); promotion of traditional herb use through “Herb Baskets” (Mostar, Metkovic, and Opuzen primary schools, with the Hutovo Blato Nature Park); Water and Life – educational creative workshops (Mocvara and Lopoc NGOs and Opuzen primary school); educational bird watching (Hutovo Blato Nature Park, Lijepa Nasa NGO, Ploce and Capljina branches); and Eco-camp – two proposed sites: one in Hutovo Blato and one in Bacina Lake/Hutovo Blato (Lijepa Nasa NGO – Capljina, Metkovic and Ploce branches).

### Publicity

A transboundary eco-school newsletter was published by the NGO Lijepa Nasa (Ploce and Capljina branches).

## Cross-border Municipal Environmental Cooperation in the Drina River Basin

**Donor:** The Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

**Amount:** EUR 58,778 (first phase), EUR 60,200 (second phase) and EUR 209,980 (third phase)

**Duration:** 2002-2004 (first phase), 2004-2005 (second phase) and 2005-2006 (third phase)

**Beneficiary countries:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro

### Project Background

Municipalities in the Drina River basin, as well as in other parts of the SEE region, face considerable problems in effectively implementing waste management policies. Solid waste is often discarded in unsanitary landfills or illegal dumpsites, which results in pollution of ground and surface water, posing risks to the environment and human health, as well as disfiguring the



## GREEN DIRECTIONS – BIRDS OF THE NERETVA DELTA

*Green Directions*, a manual for local teachers with video material, was developed for local teachers to enable them to initiate and use new approaches for raising their pupils' environmental awareness. It features new methods of interactive learning that are adapted to local conditions and promote the cultural and natural values of the Neretva Delta region. The 300 videocassettes have been distributed with 300 Teacher's Manual brochures to all schools and NGOs in the Neretva Delta region, the Institute for Education in Zagreb, the Ministry of Culture, and the Department for Social Activities in Dubrovnik.

*The Birds of Neretva Delta*, a guide for school children from the Neretva Delta was produced in cooperation with the Zagreb NGO Eleonora Society for Nature and Environment Protection. The guide is fully illustrated, containing a map and practical guidelines for bird watching.

surrounding landscape. In areas rich in natural resources such as the Drina River basin, waste pollution discourages tourism and recreation, hinders the socio-economic development of the area, and negatively impacts the local population's quality of life.

This project was proposed in order to bring together a multi-stakeholder group of local authorities, NGOs, utility companies, and a national park in Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its objective was to propose and agree upon a solution to the problem of solid waste accumulating in the shared bodies of Drina River and Lake Perucac. The project aims also at solidifying environmental cooperation across borders and providing stakeholders with tools that enable them to prevent future waste accumulations.

Due to the fact that the project area is a cross-border region inhabited by various ethnic groups, the REC has proposed a unique approach to initiate dialogue. Within the project the REC developed a model for facilitating a large and diverse group of stakeholders across borders and the concept of cooperation based upon a shared environmental problem. Results of this work can be applied in other sites in the SEE region that face similar environmental and socio-economic concerns.

### Achievements and Progress

The REC began the first phase of the project with a scoping exercise to identify the source, amount, and type of solid waste that gets into the Drina River and accumulates at Lake Perucac, as well as information on disposal practices in 16 relevant municipalities in the basin. The scoping exercise confirmed and detailed the existence of numerous illegal dumpsites and the proximity of unsanitary and unfenced landfills alongside

tributaries of the Drina River. The result is that solid waste easily gets to watercourses and eventually accumulates on Lake Perucac – a water reservoir whose outlet is closed by the dam of a nearby hydropower plant. The exercise also uncovered estimates of 4,000 to 6,000 square metres of annual solid waste accumulations on Lake Perucac, of which 40 percent is plastic, another 40 percent wood and the remaining 20 percent other materials such as rubber, metal and glass.

Based on the results of the scoping analysis, the REC proposed several solutions to mitigate the waste problem. Options were presented and discussed at a stakeholder forum that featured representatives from local authorities, NGOs, utility companies, a national park and other relevant institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia and Montenegro. At the meeting participants agreed to a solution to collect the waste from the lake and safely dispose of it in a nearby landfill. The solution foresaw the operation of a waste-cleaning boat to collect the waste from the lake and a waste-compactor to decrease the volume of collected waste to be deposited at the closest municipal landfill. In addition, stakeholders proposed the implementation of some support activities, such as manual waste collection and educational campaigns. The forum participants established two working groups established to further discuss technical and managerial aspects of the solution, as well as to propose and carry out support activities.

The REC team, in cooperation with local stakeholders and experts, prepared a study that analysed the technical, environmental, financial, economic, social and managerial aspects of the agreed solution. Based upon outcomes of the study, the REC proposed a detailed work plan to implement the solution. Both the study and the accompanying work plan were presented and discussed at a second stakeholder forum. At the meeting, participants agreed to the proposed technical and managerial scope of the solution (i.e. the specifications of the proposed equipment and how to use it) as well as its implementation plan. Two institutions would implement the solution: the Tara National Park, which is legally responsible for cleaning the lake, and the public utility in Bajina Basta that is responsible for waste management in the territory of the municipality where the lake is situated. At the forum the REC also announced that stakeholders would have the opportunity to apply for a grant of EUR 50,000 from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the implementation of the agreed solution.

In the second phase of the project, the REC assisted stakeholders to prepare a grant application for the Norwegian funds. The document was prepared based on the results of the aforementioned study and the proposed implementation plan. The grant was awarded in June 2004. The REC then solicited offers for construction and delivery of waste-cleaning and compacting

equipment. Offers were assessed at an evaluation meeting attended by the REC project team and a representative of the beneficiary institutions. As the result of the meeting, suppliers of the waste-cleaning boat and waste-compactor were selected.

The vessel is currently under construction; both the vessel and the compactor will become operational in the spring of 2005, once weather conditions become more favourable and the peak seasonal influx of waste is expected.

### What Comes Next

The first two project phases resulted in the establishment of cross-border cooperation to solve the problem of waste on Lake Perucac. The stakeholders agreed upon a solution to clean waste accumulations and its implementation will start in 2005.

In order to ensure that waste-cleaning activities bring concrete results, maintain healthy involvement by local communities and build their ownership over the process of cross-border cooperation, the third project phase was initiated. It will focus on the following three main tasks:

- establishment of a body that will monitor implementation of the solution and serve as a platform for further dialogue on environmental improvement in the region;
- capacity-building training for stakeholders and laying the basis for environmental action planning in the region; and
- announcement of grants for clean-up campaigns and various support activities proposed by the local NGO community and other interested parties in the river basin.

### Sava River Commission – Technical, Legal, Stakeholder, and Secretariat Support

**Donor:** US Government (USAID and EPA) and Japan Special Fund

**Amount:** USD 450,000 (approx.)

**Duration:** 2003-2005

**Beneficiary countries:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia

### Project Background

The Sava River was once a major commercial waterway that connected the Adriatic Sea to the Danube River and Western Europe and was a major internal trade route in what was Yugoslavia. In 2002, the four countries through which the river flows today (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Mon-

tenegro, and Slovenia) embarked on a process to re-establish a regime to protect and make use of the river. The Sava River Initiative was established with the assistance of international donors and organisations – including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – under the auspices of the Stability Pact and the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI). It represents a major step forward in the normalisation of relations and commerce after a decade of conflict. The basis for the regime is an integrated system of river basin management aimed at the sustainable development of the Sava River basin, covering numerous elements such as navigation, flood control, and environmental protection.

USAID and the EPA, through their contractors Booz Allen Hamilton and the REC, have provided technical, stakeholder, legal, and secretariat support to the effort. This support began with the negotiation of the International Framework Agreement for the Sava River Basin and the establishment of the Interim Sava River Commission. Over the period of the project, USAID and the EPA have supported the development of legal protocols, stakeholder engagement, meetings of various expert working groups, and the development of an interim action plan for achieving Sava River infrastructure projects in the areas of navigation and flood control.

With the coming into force of the Framework Agreement in December 2004, the Interim Sava Commission's work will come to an end and the permanent Sava River Commission will be set up in Zagreb.

### Achievements and Progress

Following the negotiation of the International Framework Agreement, the first meeting of the Interim Commission was held in April 2003. The work of the Interim Commission and its subsidiary bodies has proceeded with the support of the REC, which provides secretariat services to the IC and its bodies. The countries have established a Legal Working Group, a Navigation Steering Group, and a Strategic Group for Integrated Water Management, as well as a number of expert groups. These bodies together have worked industriously on the various and complex elements of the Sava River basin management system. The REC has ensured the smooth functioning of these bodies through secretariat support, including the production and distribution of documents, facilitation of communication — in particular with the international partners — and establishment of an interim secretariat website <[www.rec.org/rec/programs/sava/](http://www.rec.org/rec/programs/sava/)>.

An Interim Action Plan for the Sava was developed by the Interim Commission in cooperation with international partners. This Action Plan formed the basis for the development of infrastructure projects aimed at

improving the regime for sustainable use of the river basin. Booz Allen Hamilton and the International Agricultural Centre (IAC) of the Netherlands provided key support throughout this effort.

The Legal Working Group (LWG) focused on developing and adopting key documents for the legal functioning of the permanent Sava Commission. These documents include the Seat Agreement with the Government of Croatia, rules of procedure, staff regulations, financial rules, and terms of reference for the Secretariat. The REC provided legal support in the drafting of these instruments, including the provision of first drafts for consideration by the LWG.

The legal regime for the Sava was developed beyond the International Framework Agreement through the adoption of the Statute of the International Commission. In addition, the first protocol under the Framework Agreement was adopted — the Protocol on the Navigation Regime. Working groups were established to draft several of the nine other protocols envisioned under the Framework Agreement. The REC provided initial drafts of three of the protocols and is producing elements for an additional protocol (on floods). This latter instrument will represent a key development in the relevant international legal regime, as it is being coordinated with the development of several new international legal instruments on flood control (including one under the UNECE Convention on Protection and Use of International Watercourses and Transboundary Lakes). Finally, the REC developed a draft Permanent Methodology for Monitoring of the implementation of the agreement, with two elements, a system of reporting and a compliance mechanism. This draft is based on global and regional guidelines on compliance and enforcement of multilateral environmental agreements.

Through US government support, the REC has encouraged and supported stakeholders to join the efforts of the governments in the Sava River Basin initiative. This has taken place through information dissemination using the Zamir (“For Peace”) electronic network, stakeholder mapping, expert assessments, national roundtables, and regional capacity-building workshops. The REC drafted a stakeholder engagement strategy for the Sava Commission that is under consideration.

The permanent International Sava River Basin Commission begins its official work in spring 2005 on a firm basis, with substantial support from the governments of the four countries, the national stakeholders, and the international community. The Commission itself will be a major impetus to the implementation of concrete projects that will contribute to the re-establishment of the Sava River as an important artery between the countries, and will help to ensure that its redevelopment takes place in accordance with international standards of river basin management, leading to sustainable development.

## What Comes Next

The tasks of the International Sava River Basin Commission are daunting, despite the enormous assistance that has been provided so far. In the coming months, activities will focus on the selection and hiring of permanent staff, the purchase of equipment and furniture, training, and planning. Additionally, the Interim Action Plan will need to be revisited and adopted as the official action plan of the permanent commission, which will still need to develop its own internal capacities to provide effective services to the member states and stakeholders.

The framework agreement itself provides only an outline of the complex and multi-faceted regime that will need to be implemented for the Sava River to be redeveloped sustainably. Additional protocols will need to be drafted, adopted, ratified, and implemented, and other rules or guidelines will be needed for specific elements of river basin management.

Finally, there are already many demands on the capacities of government authorities, many of them linked to the complexities of fundamental reforms and the provision of assistance. Unfortunately, in some of the Sava countries, challenges also arise from continued political instability. The result is a continued need for international involvement and assistance in the management of the further development of cooperation among the countries.

The US government is committed to providing continued support through secretariat, legal, and stakeholder services and infrastructure project development during this transition period.

## Plants along the Borders: Balkan Plant Conservation Network

**Donor:** Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

**Amount:** EUR 100,840

**Duration:** October 16, 2001 – September 31, 2004

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro

## Project Background

Although the SEE region is rich in plant species, the nature conservation institutions from these countries have failed to halt their severe exploitation. Due to the past political situation, most SEE countries were isolated from the current international processes linked with the elaboration of the European Plant Conservation Strategy. This situation has a serious impact on ecosystems, especially in areas along the borders, where ecosystems are still well preserved and the plant species variety is extremely rich. The population living in these marginal areas is very poor, and awareness of the importance of nature conservation or potential

benefits of healthy ecosystems is very low. Cooperation between cross-border areas is an important precondition for the preservation of this natural wealth.

This project aimed to build and strengthen the network of plant experts, enhance cooperation between SEE countries, and promote the exchange of experience in plant conservation with the advanced European countries.

The project provided an opportunity for building a good basis for future developments of important plant areas (IPAs), and gave a good indication about the direction of future actions by identifying specific country needs and the main threats to plant diversity in SEE.

### Achievements and Progress

The project enhanced cooperation between SEE countries and encouraged them to collaborate and undertake joint actions in plant conservation, with a focus on cross-border IPAs. The identification of cross-border IPAs followed a practical and pragmatic approach, enabling neighbouring countries to join efforts in protecting those border areas rich in plant species.

The project strove to achieve these goals through identifying provisional national IPAs in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro by establishing a well functioning network of botanists and plant conservation experts from SEE; by supporting their involvement in international and European processes focusing on plant conservation; by identifying cross-border areas of outstanding botanical value; and by exploring the possibilities for using the IPA process and methodology as a tool for future cross-border cooperation in preserving plant diversity in SEE countries.

The project delivered direct results contributing significantly to developments in an area that received little attention in recent years in SEE countries. Following the general methods of work on other IPA projects launched by Plantlife International, national IPA teams are gathering leading plant conservation and botany experts to form the core group of a SEE network of plant conservationists. To facilitate their work, two workshops have been organised for providing training on IPA methodology<sup>7</sup> and discussing its applicability in the participating SEE countries. As a result, 474 potential IPA sites and 34 cross-border IPA sites have been identified.

During project implementation, several recommendations were formulated for overcoming obstacles and addressing specific problems related to designating and developing an efficient IPA regional network. The most striking needs have been summarised as follows: development of national strategies and action plans for the conservation and sustainable use of plant diversity and plant genetic resources; harmonisation between national policy measures and international requirements; functional mechanisms for law enforcement

and socio-economic provisions (e.g. favouring eco-tourism development); inclusion of relevant regionally and locally threatened species into global and European "red lists" and annexes of the Habitats Directive and the Bern Convention; review and update of national "red data" books in accordance with the new IUCN criteria; establishing some form of protection for those IPAs outside the boundaries of existing protected areas; improving national networks of protected areas and relevant legislation; research (including intensive fieldwork) for obtaining more recent data on flora and habitats; support for international cooperation, training and exchange; general training on the use of IPA methodology targeting larger groups of experts and stakeholders; development of national/regional biodiversity information systems and clearinghouse mechanisms; and technical and financial assistance for the use of remote sensing and GIS-based technologies.

A promotional brochure on project outcomes was published. The European Plant Conservation Strategy was translated into four CEE languages (Albanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian and Serbian). For Croatia, following the specific needs and recommendations, the IPA Site Selection Methodology was translated instead. All translated documents were presented on the project webpage and other websites. Local-language IPA brochures were also published in Bulgarian, Macedonian and Croatian.

### Main Results

Four national reports on provisional IPAs in selected SEE countries were elaborated in accordance with the criteria of the *Site Selection Manual* elaborated by Plantlife.

The publication of a regional report on the status of plant conservation in SEE countries led to the identification of 474 potential IPA sites and 34 cross-border IPA sites.

Within the Balkan Plant Conservation Network: leading plant conservation experts from South East Europe were linked with relevant international networks to share experiences with Central and Eastern European countries European and Western European countries in the process of IPA identification.

Two workshops were held: an initial workshop to bring plant conservation methods to South Eastern European countries (with representatives from selected European organisations with experience in plant protection), and a discussion on information collected to identify possible measures and initiatives for plant conservation in SEE countries. An exchange of experiences about plant conservation practices will be facilitated.

Plantlife International has included the results of national IPA data in the European database of IPAs.

The results of the project were presented at the Fourth Planta Europa Conference in Valencia, Spain in September 2004.

### What Comes Next

The project and its results proved to be of great interest to the participating countries, and the need for its continuation has been expressed several times. In some countries the project even led to the initiation of nationwide processes focusing on this topic (Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro). During project implementation, attention was also paid to similar processes going on in the region and its immediate surroundings – and cooperation in this regard has been sought after. SEE experts will have access to the European Database of IPAs, created and maintained by Plantlife International. IPA information in SEE will be incorporated into Plantlife International's publication on IPA project implementation in Europe.

### Endnotes

- 1 See the annex to the History of REReP chapter.
- 2 Shkoder Lake is also known as Skadar Lake (the common Slavic form) and Shkodra Lake (from the Albanian name).
- 3 See the annex to the History of REReP chapter.
- 4 The conclusions are annexed to this chapter (Annex 1).
- 5 The selected projects are annexed to this chapter (Annex 2).
- 6 See Annex 3 to this chapter.
- 7 Plantlife International, a UK based organisation, developed the IPA Methodology that has been directly involved in training SEE experts.



## Conclusions

### of the Meeting of Senior Officials from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro on the Cross-Border Cooperation within the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) Current Status and Needs

*May 20-21, 2004 Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro*

Senior Officials from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, representatives of international agencies and institutions met in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro, on May 20-21, 2004 to discuss the current status and needs in the cross-border cooperation in South Eastern Europe (SEE).

The meeting built on the priority areas for cross-border cooperation identified by the Joint Statement of the Skopje Ministerial Meeting of October 15, 2003. It also followed up on the discussions at the 6th REReP Task Force meeting of November 7, 2003 about the need for a regular review process of the achievements and problems in the SEE cross-border cooperation and local authorities support. The meeting took also into account the recommendations made in the Review of the Regional Environment Reconstruction Programme for SEE (REReP) initiated by the European Commission and issued in January 2004.

EU integration is the major political goal of all countries of the region. The third Annual Report of the Commission on the Stabilisation and Association Process for SEE of March 30, 2004 provides the basis for further work across borders to meet environmental challenges. Particularly, the commission's proposal for European Partnerships, Action Plans to be adopted under them, and the planned European Neighborhood Instrument will further assist the process of implementation.

The participants welcomed the meeting as an opportunity to exchange information, views and experience on the current status and needs in SEE cross-border cooperation.

The participants presented current and future cross-border activities in the region, using variety of instruments, models and approaches for joint work. The REReP Secretariat will summarise this information for presentation at the 7th REReP Task Force meeting to take place in Belgrade on September 30 – October 1, 2004.

Based on contributions at the meeting, the following priorities regarding cross-border cooperation in SEE were identified:

- address common activities in the European Partnerships and the Action Plans for their implementation; exchange of information on the transposition and implementation status of EU Directives. Capacity building for improving negotiation skills;
- training for preparation and implementation of heavy investment projects; transfer of lessons learned from the new EU member states and candidate countries, more specifically the pre-accession funds;
- capacity building in nature conservation activities and management of protected areas, e.g. establishment of visitors centres, promotional materials for the general public;
- assistance in environmental law drafting related to the EU approximation;
- assistance in environmental law enforcement and compliance;
- address the implications of the decentralisation process. Enhance the capacity building on local level, development and promotion of LEAPs and Local Agenda 21. Promotion of the cooperation among the municipalities as a tool for local communities support;
- further strengthen the cooperation with EEA within the framework of EIONET; facilitate the process of direct exchange of environmental data among the SEE countries;
- development of PRTRs systems, modelling them after the available positive experience in the region, e.g. Croatian Water Information System;

- revision and improvement of the existing flood control systems, early warning systems for flood prevention and control as well as accidental pollution, development of tools for information sharing, e.g. Danube river basin;
- exchange of experience and capacity building in implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, e.g. conventions, protocols, through cross-border cooperation; and
- assistance to companies introducing the EMAS and ISO 14000 standards.

The following steps need to be taken in order to further develop cross-border cooperation in the region:

- Make more human and financial resources available to increase the capacity of the relevant institutions.
- Identify joint environmental priorities of the countries.
- Improve the management structures for project implementation.
- Train the staff of all relevant institutions on central and local level.
- Improve the information and expertise exchange among relevant institutions in a coordinated manner.
- Encourage and support local initiative for cross-border cooperation through increased financial assistance.

The participants exchanged valuable information on lessons learned in cross-border cooperation that could be summarised as follows:

- Environment is a particularly suitable platform for cross-border cooperation.
- Cross-border projects should be focused on resolving concrete problems, they should be rather process than resource oriented, with clear agreement on rules and procedures to be adopted.
- Good will to cooperate, local ownership and commitment are vital preconditions for success. Trust building measures have to be implemented.
- Good level of communication among project partners and stakeholders should be kept to raise awareness about cross-border cooperation.

Participants expressed their recognition to the European Commission, donor countries within and outside Europe, international organisations and institutions for support and assistance. They called for mobilisation of additional resources for assisting the successful implementation of the cross-border activities. The EU Neighbourhood Policy and Instrument, and the ODA funds of the new EU member states create additional opportunities for technical assistance and support.

Participants congratulated the host, Serbia and Montenegro, and thanked the Government of Norway for the financial support of the meeting and the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe for organising this exchange.

## Project Ideas for Cross-Border and Regional Cooperation

As selected and agreed by the SEE Senior Officials from Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration) in Belgrade in September 2004. Preliminary budgets for all programmes are to be decided.

### Project Ideas for Cross-Border Cooperation

Criteria for selection:

- Projects are supported by central/local authorities cooperating around common borders to solve priority environmental problems of common interests;
- All sides of the respective borders participate in the

project on equal footing;

- Projects are in line with national policies, priorities and interests of the countries/stakeholders involved;
- NGOs and the general public will be consulted and involved in project implementation.

Sectors identified:

- Water Management
- Information Systems and Data Sharing
- Capacity Building, Cooperation and Partnerships in the Cross-Border Context
- Nature Protection (including Biodiversity)

#### I. WATER MANAGEMENT

Project title	Countries and administrative territories involved	Duration	Originator
1. Technical Assistance for the Implementation of the Agreement between FYR Macedonia and Albania for the Protection and Sustainable Development of Lake Ohrid and its Watershed	FYR Macedonia, Albania	24 months	FYR Macedonia
2. Development and Implementation of Bojana/Buna River Basin Management Plan	Montenegro, Albania	24 months	Montenegro
3. Technical Assistance for the Development of Sustainable Transport on and around Skadar/Shkodra Lake	Montenegro, Albania	12 months	Montenegro
4. Development and Implementation of the Drina River Basin Management Plan	Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina	24 months	Serbia
5. Development and Implementation of the Struma/Strumica River Basin Management Plan	Bulgaria, FYR Macedonia	18 months	Bulgaria

## II. INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND DATA SHARING

Project title	Countries and administrative territories involved	Duration	Originator
1. Establishment of Network of Environmental Information and Early Warning and Response Systems in Selected Border Municipalities/Regions (TBD)	Bulgaria, FYR Macedonia, SCG, (Romania), Albania, Kosovo (UNMIK), Croatia, BiH	24 months	Bulgaria
2. Development of GIS for Skadar Lake	Serbia and Montenegro, Albania	24 months	Montenegro

## III. CAPACITY BUILDING, COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS IN THE CROSS-BORDER CONTEXT

Project title	Countries and administrative territories involved	Duration	Originator
1. Harmonising the Implementation of Espoo Convention in Croatia, BiH and SCG	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro	6 months	Croatia
2. Protecting International Lake Areas (Shkodra/Prespa/Ohrid) through Integrated Land Use Planning and Economic Instruments	Albania, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Greece	24 months	Albania

## IV. NATURE PROTECTION (INCLUDING BIODIVERSITY)

Project title	Countries and administrative territories involved	Duration	Originator
1. Preparatory Work for Proclaiming the Drina Transboundary Biosphere Reserve	Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina	24 months	Serbia
2. Establishment of the First Balkan International Peace Park	Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (UNMIK)	24 months	UNMIK
3. Establishing a Joint Forum for the Protection of the Dinarides' Biodiversity	Montenegro, Croatia Bosnia and Herzegovina	12 months	
4. Assessing Opportunities for the Proclamation of Jablanica as a Protected Area	Albania, FYR Macedonia	24 months	FYR Macedonia
5. Assessing Opportunities for the Proclamation of Belasica as a Protected Area	FYR Macedonia, Bulgaria	24 months	Bulgaria

## Project Ideas for Regional Cooperation

Criteria for selection:

- Projects offer an opportunity for exchange of common experiences, based on EU integration and the harmonisation process.
  - Projects are in line with national policies, priorities and interests of the countries/stakeholders involved.
- NGOs and the general public will be consulted and involved in project implementation.

Following sectors identified:

- Information Systems and Data Sharing
- Capacity Building, Cooperation and Partnerships in the cross -border Context
- Nature Protection (including Biodiversity)

### I. INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND DATA SHARING

Project title	Countries and administrative territories involved	Duration	Originator
1. Further Development of a REReP Sub-Programme for Cross-Border Cooperation in SEE	All SEE countries	12 months	FYR Macedonia
2. Development of Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers in South Eastern Europe	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (UNMIK), Bulgaria	24 months	Croatia
3. Strengthening Capacities in Environmental Monitoring, Reporting and EIONET Network beyond the Second Phase (2004-2006)	Albania, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina	36 months	Albania

### II. CAPACITY BUILDING, COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS IN THE CROSS-BORDER CONTEXT

Project title	Countries and administrative territories involved	Duration	Originator
1. Networking between the Departments for EU Integration and Legislation and Regular Consultations and Exchanges with DG Environment and Other Relevant EC Structures	Albania, FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (UNMIK)	48 months	Albania
2. Promoting Principles of Local Agenda 21 and Developing REAPs (and LEAPs) Following a Cross-Border Approach;	Albania, FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (UNMIK), Croatia	24 months	UNMIK
3. Assistance to SEE Companies in Introducing EMAS and ISO 14000 Standards	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (UNMIK), Bulgaria	18 months	Croatia
4. Sharing Experiences in the Development and Introduction of Economic Instruments	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (UNMIK)	24 months	Croatia
5. Joint Training for the Officials Exercising Boundary Control Related to International Conventions	Bulgaria, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Albania, Serbia and Montenegro	18 months	Bulgaria



III. NATURE PROTECTION (INCLUDING BIODIVERSITY)			
Project title	Countries and administrative territories involved	Duration	Originator
1. Capacity Building of Municipalities Located in Areas Rich in Biodiversity for the Management of Valuable Shared Natural Resources	Albania, FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro	18 months	UNMIK

### Conclusions

#### Of the Sub-regional Cross-Border Meeting 'Environmental Protection as a Neutral Platform for Reconciliation, Cooperation and Stability'

*March 10, 2005, Milocer, Republic of Montenegro, Serbia and Montenegro*

The Minister of Environment and Physical Planning of the Republic of Montenegro, the Federal Minister of Urban Planning and Environment of the Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina, senior officials from the Republic of Montenegro, Republic of Croatia, Republic of Srpska – Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina, representatives of the European Commission, Italy, Netherlands, Japan, European Agency for Reconstruction, USAID, UNESCO, IUCN, UNEP, UNDP, GTZ, IRD, OSCE and the Council of Europe met together to discuss the status of the cross-border cooperation between the Republic of Montenegro and neighbouring countries. The meeting took place on the invitation of the Minister of Environment and Physical Planning of the Republic of Montenegro. The event was financially supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway and organised by the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC).

The participating countries and entities from South Eastern Europe (SEE) presented their current environmental challenges and priorities and ongoing and planned cross-border initiatives. The REC presented the latest developments in the Stabilisation and Association process to the EU, as well as the available information on the Neighbourhood Instruments and funding opportunities. The REC also presented the conclusions from the cross-border meetings that took place in May and September 2004 and emphasised the agreed cross-border project activities between the SEE countries. Those initiatives were presented at the last REReP Task Force meeting in September 2004 by the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the request by the other SEE countries.

UNEP gave a presentation on the Environment and Security (EnvSec) Initiative by UNDP-OSCE-UNEP-

NATO and highlighted that the proceedings and outcomes of this meeting will be considered a most welcome building block in the Initiative.

The country presentations and contributions by the participating international organisations focused on the following issues:

#### The Republic of Montenegro

- Integrated eco-system management for cross-border waters (GEF/World Bank project for Skadar Lake, Bojana River with the Republic of Albania; Tara and Cehotina with the Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina);
- Protected areas and biodiversity management (new national and regional parks, e.g. the Adriatic coastal zone with the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Albania, Prokletije Mountain with the Republic of Albania etc);
- Enhanced cooperation on all projects that have or may have trans-boundary impacts, in all phases (e.g. cooperation with other Environmental Ministries from the Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Albania);
- Cooperation regarding the EU Accession process (e.g. exchange of experience with the Republic of Croatia);
- Capacity building programmes – strengthening the institutions and insuring better enforcement;
- Information and monitoring systems (exchange of information regarding state of environment with neighbouring countries);
- Enhanced cooperation in framework of Adriatic Ionian Initiative:
  - extension of sub-regional contingency plan for prevention of, preparedness for and response to major marine pollution incidents from the North Adriatic to the entire Adriatic Ionian region;
  - promotion and realisation of ADRICOSM partnership;
  - extension to the Republic of Montenegro and the Republic of Albania of the Adriatic Sea Environ-

mental Master Plan Project (ASEMP) currently implemented by UNESCO ROSTE in the Republic of Croatia.

- Improvement of trans-boundary cooperation in the Adriatic Sea region, within the framework of UNEP/MAP.

### **The Republic of Croatia**

- Water management issues (exchange of experience/assistance in water management plans development; Sava River; Neretva and Trebisnjica GEF project);
- Montreal Protocol (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Republic of Albania); and
- International Conventions (Espoo, CITES, Basel Convention; assistance to Serbia and Montenegro and Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina in the implementation process).

### **Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina**

- Protection and management of cross-border waters (GEF/World Bank project on Neretva and Trebisnjica Basin with the Republic of Croatia, invitation for the Republic of Montenegro to participate; Drina River with the Republic of Serbia, regional solid waste disposal site; Sava River with the Republic of Serbia, Republic of Croatia and Slovenia; Tara River with the Republic of Montenegro, prepare EIA study; protection of Una River initiated in Bosnia and Herzegovina, invitation to the Republic of Croatia to follow the example)
- Air pollution (thermo-power plants in Gacko and Ugljevik with trans-boundary effects with Serbia and Montenegro and the Republic of Croatia); and
- International Conventions (Barcelona and Danube Conventions, air pollution and climate change).

The senior officials mentioned several successful REReP projects, e.g. Promotion of Networks and Exchanges in SEE countries (supported by SDC), BERCEN, Priority Environmental Investment Programme (supported by EC), Environment and Energy Efficiency Fund in the Republic of Croatia (supported by GTZ) and others.

EAR reported about accomplished strategic master plans for solid wastes and waste waters. In 2005, support will focus on enhancing capacity of environmental authorities in the planning, permitting, inspecting, monitoring, enforcement and project management. EAR will help attract IFI funding for key environmental infrastructure rehabilitation programmes. The legislative har-

monisation will be also supported. The establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency in the Republic of Montenegro is also among the priority projects.

IUCN supports the trans-boundary approach to nature conservation and emphasises the necessity of a bottom-up rather than top-down process. Cooperation of international donors and organisations should serve the needs of the SEE countries and must not result in claiming of funds only. The sub-regional meeting is an excellent opportunity for international dialogue and should be continued.

IUCN provided information about foreseen projects regarding: the Sava-River Floodplain Biodiversity Conservation (Slovenia, the Republic of Croatia, Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Serbia), the Stara Planina Green Belt (Bulgaria and the Republic of Serbia, in cooperation with the REC), the Trans-boundary Cooperation in the region (to be specified, in cooperation with the REC) and the Dinaric Arc Corridor (led by WWF, in cooperation with UNESCO and UNDP).

UNESCO-ROSTE underlined the fact that, together with environmental protection, environmental integration is a key issue in the SEE region, and called for concrete actions aiming at building specific capacities in this view, at various levels and in a cross-border perspective. UNESCO also underlined the fact that cross-border initiatives should not only be focused on sites having common borders, but also referring to larger environmental systems such as river basins, lakes, mountainous areas or the Adriatic Sea basin itself, in the frame of which there is a clear need for the development of concerted and coordinated actions along ecological corridors and networks of protected areas, having the ultimate goal of contributing to the harmonisation of policies inside the participating countries as well as across their respective borders.

UNESCO-ROSTE also informed the participants about concrete actions to be developed by this agency in the coming years, such as June 2005 Biking Balkans, clearly focused on cross-border sites of international relevance, such as the Durmitor/Tara river World Heritage site and Biosphere Reserve in the Republic of Montenegro and Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kotor and its bay in the Republic of Montenegro, the Ohrid and Prespa Lakes, the Edirne Delta (shared by Turkey and Greece) and others belonging to major systems such as the Sava river basin or Dinaric Arc, where integrated approaches to the use of natural and cultural assets in the support of sustainable development will be tested and consolidated. Similar actions call for, and should benefit from, more synergetic cooperation with international partners such as IUCN, the REC, UNDP, GTZ, SDC and Italy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry for the Environment and Territory).

These actions will ideally be prolonged by regional educational and capacity building efforts, making the best use of the experience gained in the frame of site-focused actions.

OSCE raised the issue of the importance of the environmental education in the region and called all parties to work together in this field.

The Council of Europe spoke about the 9th meeting of the Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (March 16-17, Strasbourg). The meeting will discuss: implementation of the Kiev Resolution on Biodiversity followed by the Proposal on the structure of the monitoring of its implementation; a number of action plans (public participation and awareness, implementation of protected areas and ecological net-

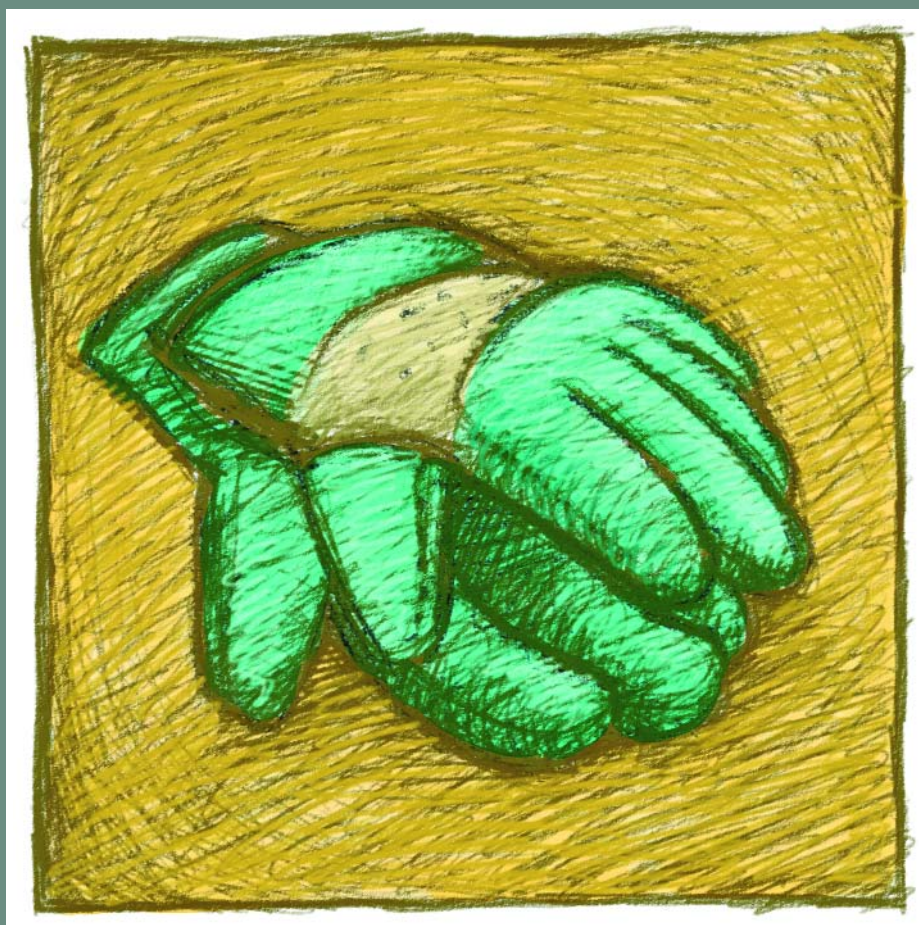
work, implementation of foresting and biodiversity); preparation of 4th Conference on Biodiversity (2006) and 6th Belgrade Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (2007).

All participants welcomed the Montenegrin initiative on sub-regional cross-border cooperation in the framework of environmental protection as a neutral platform for reconciliation, cooperation and stability, and encouraged development of similar activities in other SEE sub-regions.

Participants congratulated the host government of Montenegro and thanked the government of Norway for the financial support and the Regional Environmental Center for organising and facilitating the meeting.







## Reducing Environmental Health Threats and Biodiversity Loss



# Reducing Environmental Health Threats and Biodiversity Loss

South Eastern Europe contains such rich biodiversity that it is considered a veritable treasure chest of European natural heritage. REReP recognises the importance of using natural resources in a sustainable manner and conserving natural and cultural heritage to further stability and economic success in the region. Despite recent progress, however, biodiversity loss continues unabated.

As environmental action often has to take place across borders and engage the interest and commitment of civil society, it provides an opportunity for bringing communities together in a shared endeavour. The World Conservation Union (IUCN), which has developed a portfolio of projects based on transboundary cooperation, opened the Programme Office for South Eastern Europe in Belgrade in June 2004.

The exchange of experiences and overall communication within the region – among different sectors as well as between the region and the rest of Europe – provide good opportunities for curbing biodiversity loss. With support the government of Norway, the Balkan Biodiversity from Conservation forum has been established to serve as a platform for countries to share their experiences, to bring together decision makers and other representatives of different sectors, and to facilitate inter-sectoral cooperation between tourism, nature conservation and agriculture.

After decades of authoritarian governance and violent conflicts in the region, potential health threats have appeared in the form of environmental hot spots from outdated heavy industry and mining, and resulted from rapid changes in consumption patterns, energy and transport. Based on the regional report on environment and security priorities in SEE and consultations with individual countries, the Environment and Security (EnvSec) Initiative was launched in 2003 with three priority fields of action: managing and reducing transboundary risks of hazardous activities; management of transboundary natural resources; and cross-cutting issues (e.g. awareness, information and education).

## Lake Ohrid Conservation Project (GEF)

**Donor:** Global Environment Facility/World Bank

**Amount:** USD 2,296,000

**Duration:** 1999-2004

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

## Project Background

The primary objective of the Lake Ohrid Conservation Project (LOCP) is to develop a basis for the joint management and protection of Lake Ohrid by the governments and peoples of Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. By establishing a basis for joint management of the Lake Ohrid watershed, the project will promote cost-effective solutions to transboundary natural resource management and pollution problems, and provide a basis for sustainable economic development of the watershed.

The GEF grant in support of the implementation of the LOCP will fund equipment, staff and consultants, studies and pilot projects, and public awareness and training programmes required to implement the activities of these four components: institutional strengthening, monitoring, participatory watershed management, and public awareness and participation.

The institutional strengthening component focuses on increasing the capacity of public officials at all levels of the Lake Ohrid watershed for effective enforcement of each country's environmental laws, regulations, standards and policies. The Lake Ohrid monitoring component focuses on establishing a comprehensive binational monitoring programme to inform the public and local officials, as well as to provide the environmental information necessary for effective and rational planning and decision making. The participatory watershed management component aims to promote the formation of a broadly representative watershed management committee, to pilot and demonstrate practical, participatory and cost-effective actions to protect and conserve Lake Ohrid, and to adopt and implement a watershed action plan. The public awareness and participation component aims to create public awareness and increase community participation to enable the effective and sustainable implementation of the LOCP.

This project was the first activity ever implemented on joint management and protection of natural resources in the region especially because it was implemented on watershed level taking joint action and bodies in the process of decision making.

### **Achievements and Progress**

The LOCP fulfilled its basic aim of establishing a basis for long-term joint management and sustainable development of the Lake Ohrid Watershed. Several activities contributed to this effort.

First, the two national governments signed the Agreement for Joint Protection and Sustainable Development of the Lake Ohrid Watershed, an initiative of the project that has become a valuable legal instrument. This agreement clearly states the duties of both governments, together and separately, in protecting the watershed and initiating its implementation. A secretariat and joint Lake Ohrid Watershed committee will be established.

Second, cooperation between Macedonian and Albanian experts, scientists and politicians led to the adoption of the Joint Action Plan – the first ever of its kind between the nations – for the watershed. It will become part of governmental policy and measures regarding future actions providing simultaneously a basis for future donations and future projects. The Joint Action Plan provides short-term measures to reduce point and non-point sources of pollution, to protect habitats and to continue cooperation between the two countries.

Third, the LOCP ensured intensive cooperation of scientists from both sides. This resulted in the signing of joint protocols for sampling and analysis, and the Joint Quality Assurance Protocol. This broad cooperation resulted in the first State of Environment Report for Lake Ohrid and its Watershed, a baseline study for future research programmes and actions, and gives a truer picture of the lake and its hot spots.

After significant delays, the LOCP succeeded in drafting the Monitoring Programme, ensuring its sustainability within the national programme and national budget. National programmes from both sides are in the phase of joint harmonisation, and newly established monitoring teams provide conditions for continuous and qualitative monitoring, as well as dissemination of the results important to the decision making process.

Fourth, investments in the non-governmental sector and the establishment of green centres raise public awareness of the watershed. Cooperation between local governments increased in the protection of the lake. The LOCP produced a twinning agreement and established the celebration of Lake Ohrid Day to increase communication and cooperation, which are made even more important by the governmental decentralisation occurring on both sides.

Five, small investments in pilot projects and catalytic measures were the most visible and public areas of the programme. Direct investments were made in the reforestation of erosive segments on tributaries, procurement of bins for solid waste, marking of educational trails and renovation of mountain lodges in the national park, and campaigning for the use of phosphate-free detergents. Some of these actions provoked concrete measures by the government in the law and the policy of protection (e.g. phosphate-free detergent policy). In addition, the construction of five manure management platforms helped to reduce agricultural pollution.

The LOCP employed an integrative approach and coordinated its activities with other donors in the region, which included organisations like the KfW<sup>1</sup> banking group, the Swiss Federal Institute for Environmental Science and Technology (EAWAG), and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO, also for Prespa Park).

### **What Comes Next**

Successful implementation of the programme was pointed to by international organisations as a positive example of cross-border management. Its approach and lessons learned are being recommended to other similar projects in the region. A new joint project was supported. Its concept is based on the Joint Action Plan, which will again be applied to Lake Ohrid, but will end with providing the conditions for joint management of the entire Drim River Basin.

## **Romania Biodiversity Conservation Management Project (GEF)**

**Donor:** GEF (USD 5.5 million) and governmental contribution (USD 3.3 million)

**Amount:** USD 8.8 million

**Duration:** Until Dec. 31, 2005

**Beneficiary country:** Romania

### **Project Background**

The main objective of the project is sustainable conservation of the biological diversity and ecological integrity of the Romanian forest, alpine and meadow ecosystems of the Carpathian Mountain chain. Specifically, the project will establish effective inter-sectoral participatory planning and sustainable management of natural ecosystems and associated landscapes at three demonstration sites in the Carpathian Mountains (Retezat, Piatra Craiului, and Vanatori Neamt), as well as mechanisms to support the replication of these activities at other priority conservation sites. Since almost 60 percent of the Carpathian Mountains are in Romania, the project will make a significant contribu-

tion to other regional initiatives to conserve the biodiversity of the Carpathian chain. The mountains' contiguous forests are the focus of international conservation initiatives in all other Carpathian countries. At the local level, the project would build mechanisms and capacity to assist local stakeholders, including local communities, local governments, and NGOs, to participate in the preparation and implementation of conservation management and development plans.

The sustainable management of the project sites will benefit poor rural communities and local economies adjacent to the sites by stimulating economic development, including tourism, based on the sustainable management of protected areas and natural resources.

### Achievements and Progress

The project is currently under the supervision process (the last three supervision missions took place in November 2003, September 2004 and February 2005).

A brief list of the current project's achievements includes:

- management systems in place, or being developed, at three project sites, including systems to establish baseline information and to monitor local impacts on biodiversity;
- strengthening of educational public awareness programmes;
- development of park management plans, including geographic and management information systems;
- activities to improve prospects for eco-tourism;
- establishment of good international links, both to increase awareness of the parks among the international community and to gain from exposure to other systems of protected area management; and
- harmonisation of the governmental decision (230/2003) to establish the limits of national and natural parks with additional regulatory instruments.

An important institutional decision has been taken by the National Forest Administration to extend its plans for certification from the Forest Stewardship Council for the million hectares of state forests originally envisaged and all of the remaining state-owned forests, covering an area of around 4 million hectares.

Government Order 850 (October 27, 2003) established the means by which park management administrations would be set up, and allows the Ministry of Environment and Water Management to contract out protected area management services. The order provided for interested institutions to apply to manage individual national parks. Incremental financing proposals to various funding sources (e.g. PHARE, EU Life, GEF MSP) have been developed for nearly half of the 17 parks.

In Retezat, the Small Grants Programme continues as planned, and the park management team monitors the implementation of approved projects, maintaining contact with local NGOs, and carrying out intermediate evaluations of the completed work. Ecotourism activities are being promoted, particularly with bed and breakfast owners, and by working with other local stakeholders. Public awareness programmes implemented by the park include working with Deva and Hunedora county schools on a curriculum and training materials for environmental education. A tourist map has been prepared and made available for purchase. Grazing studies have been completed for the central area of the park and are to be extended to cover the total area of the park. Also, a visitor's centre and personnel dwellings are under construction.

In Vanatori Neamt, the Small Grants Programme includes activities such as park information points, school ecological clubs, and grazing area improvement. In Piatra Craiului, there are problems over conflicting responsibility and accountability for implementing the park management plan, which should be addressed through regulatory and other mechanisms.

### What Comes Next

The project team is working on proposals to follow up on the programme's activities. Focus will be placed on solving conflicting responsibilities in the three protected areas, including:

- sanctioning the Romanian Academy, which has undertaken actions in violation of the principles outlined in the Retezat park management plan;
- different views between the monasteries and the park with respect to certified forest management (in Vanatorii Neamt); and
- encouraging private forest owners managing forests in the southern part of the park in accordance with the broader objectives of protected area management.

### Balkan Biodiversity Conservation Forum

**Donor:** Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

**Amount:** EUR 107,970

**Duration:** September 19, 2002 – June 30, 2004

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro

### Project Background

The Balkan Peninsula is one of the richest regions of Europe in terms of biodiversity and is particularly important as it hosts many species within a narrow



range of occurrence. The preserved natural heritage in South Eastern Europe is immense, but ongoing socio-economic processes pose serious risks.

During the implementation of REReP projects, the REC has observed the following problems, occurring in all South East European countries in the field of nature conservation and biodiversity protection:

- lack of cooperation between different sectors and ministries of environment within the countries and between countries;
- lack of ability to cooperate with other organisations on local and regional level; and
- lack of knowledge of global trends in nature conservation.

The exchange of experiences and communication within the region, among different sectors, as well as between the region and the rest of Europe, provide good opportunities for improving this situation. The project strove to fill the gap by providing additional support to SEE countries for establishing a communication forum to serve as a platform for sharing experiences of different countries, bringing together decision makers and other representatives of different sectors and, in the end, facilitate inter-sectoral cooperation between tourism, nature conservation and agriculture. It also assisted SEE countries in setting up inter-sectoral networks of experts (government officials, ministry representatives, nature conservation authorities and NGOs) from the sectors of environment, agriculture, rural development, nature conservation and tourism.

### Achievements and Progress

Two regional workshops have been held within the project: one focusing on the integration of biodiversity conservation principles in agriculture, the other on ecotourism – the area where tourism development and nature conservation can join forces and set similar goals. The themes of both workshops were shaped according to specific aspects of the topics, as well as the circumstances and specific needs of the countries in the region, and both focused on identifying challenges, the main problematic points where change is needed and future opportunities. The key issue in both cases was the integration of nature conservation in the development of rural areas in SEE countries, with a special focus on the sectors which have the most relevance for these areas – i.e. agriculture and tourism. Special attention was given to the role of local people in activities and sectoral development.

The regional conference Biodiversity and Ecotourism in South East Europe was organised for November 2003, in Sofia, Bulgaria. For the first time, representatives of ministries, protected-area authorities, universities, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, tourism associations, and consul-

tancies from across the region and beyond, gathered to discuss the status of ecotourism in South Eastern Europe. The conference focused on overall definitions, policy issues and challenges in the development of ecotourism; current national, regional and international initiatives; and experiences with the promotion of ecotourism in relationship to biodiversity conservation.

The conference established a sectoral network of experts from the environmental, rural development, and tourism sectors in SEE countries as an initial step towards the development of regional ecotourism networks aimed at developing collective ecotourism products and marketing. Participants agreed that the network will focus on:

- facilitating active regional policy dialogue, linking ecotourism to protected area management, rural development and national plans and institutional frameworks;
- creating a positive image and developing brand identity for the region, positioning it competitively to attract international visitors, in collaboration with national and regional tourism agencies;
- disseminating best practices (tested models, innovative programmes, planning tools, lessons learned, and evaluation mechanisms) to key government agencies, businesses, NGOs, and development assistance agencies and donors;
- developing an implementation strategy based on a portfolio of regionally relevant and innovative ecotourism initiatives, supported by public/private sector partnerships (e.g. information clearinghouses); and
- establishing facilitation procedures and financial mechanisms, guided by a multi-stakeholder regional ecotourism working group, through which resources from governments, donors and the private sector can be coordinated and effectively utilised to realise the aims listed above.

Ultimately, the network should promote regional initiatives, focusing on:

- developing transnational ecotourism trip circuits, initiatives and competitive clusters linked to major protected areas in order to stimulate economic growth in surrounding rural communities;
- establishing effective ecotourism information management systems;
- stimulating cooperative marketing and promotion;
- implementing human resource development and training initiatives;
- establishing institutional arrangements for destination management at regional and cross-border levels; and

- establishing sustainability indicators and a monitoring system to assess and improve performance.

The SEE regional workshop Agriculture and Biodiversity was held in Mavrovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in July 2004. Experts from South Eastern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe exchanged information about the current situation and trends in agriculture/rural development and nature conservation, as well as the relationship between agriculture and biodiversity in the region. The workshop provided a platform for discussions on nature conservation, tourism development and agriculture in SEE countries; assisted the SEE countries' stakeholders governments to take active part in the debate about integration of nature conservation into tourism and agriculture policy at the regional level, and demonstrated good practice in developing both sectors in SEE countries.

The participants agreed that the rural areas of South Eastern Europe have considerable potential to produce high-quality, healthy food. At the same time, these countries have large, well preserved natural and cultural landscapes and traditional practices that provide a good basis for sustainable development. Participants analysed the actual implementation of agricultural programmes from the point of view of integration of biodiversity conservation, to learn more about the interrelationship between agricultural and biodiversity policy and development on the ground. They drew conclusions and policy recommendations after comparing various experiences at national and regional level.

The participants obtained better understanding about the current development of the national agro-environmental/rural development programmes from the point of view of biodiversity conservation. In order to play a more active role in the future, SEE states need to improve their analytical capacity and knowledge about what works and does not work in their rural areas. They can benefit from examples of good practice that can serve as the basis for future policy making. If these states can develop more successful (though not necessarily more costly) mechanisms to support agriculture and rural areas, they may avoid some of the social and environmental problems that would arise with the rapid transition to the West European model of agriculture. It was agreed that more joint efforts should be made by national authorities, scientific institutes and non-governmental organisations in this direction.

Several priority issues were identified at the conference that have proved to be important for supporting the integration of agriculture and nature conservation at a regional level in South Eastern Europe. Participants identified initiatives where joint activi-

ties could produce benefits for rural population from both biodiversity conservation and agriculture:

- National strategies for sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservations should be (further) developed.
- Guidelines for the integration of nature conservation principles in agricultural policies should be developed.
- A regional network of stakeholders in the field of sustainable agriculture should be established.
- Exchange of experience and capacity building actions should be organised and encouraged at the regional level.
- The marketing and promotion of agricultural products produced in a sustainable way should be supported.

In order to provide online information to participants and to disseminate results of the project, English-language websites have been created on the main REC web domain, which are available at [www.rec.org/REC/Programs/BalkanForum/](http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/BalkanForum/).

### What Comes Next

The approach applied within the project proved to be almost without precedent in the countries involved. Many examples signalled that it was among the first occasions that ministerial level representatives of different sectors discussed common issues, and the need for integration has been recognised by both sides. By experiencing the same learning process in other countries (e.g. EU member states and accession countries) and seeing concrete examples where the lack of integration damages sustainable development, many possibilities for improvement have been identified.

Future activities should include broader participation from key stakeholders – particularly tourism businesses and chambers; agriculture associations; local authorities; local, regional and national tourism organisations; universities; and, government policy makers.

### Environment and Security (EnvSec) Initiative in South Eastern Europe

United Nations Development Programme, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, United Nations Environment Programme, North Atlantic Treaty Organization

**Duration:** 2002-2007

**Beneficiary countries/territories:** South Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration))

Environment and Security (EnvSec) is an initiative of three organisations – the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and recently joined by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as an associate partner.

The initiative aims to provide a framework for cooperation on environmental issues across borders and promoting peace and stability through environmental cooperation and sustainable development. The initiative focused on the three pilot regions: Central Asia, the Caucasus and South Eastern Europe (SEE).

The initiative is divided into three distinct but inter-linked pillars, dealing with:

- vulnerability assessment and monitoring;
- capacity building and institutional development; and
- policy development and implementation.

After launching the initiative at the Kiev ministerial conference in May 2003, and preparation of the regional report on environment and security priorities in SEE, the EnvSec Partners, in consultations with the countries in the region, have developed the following priority fields of action:

- management and reduction transboundary risks of hazardous activities;
- management of transboundary natural resources; and
- cross-cutting issues (e.g. awareness, information, education).

The identified fields of action, including project proposals, were presented at and confirmed by the EnvSec Consultations in SEE, an event held in Skopje on September 23-24, 2004.

### **Managing and Reducing Transboundary Risks of Hazardous Activities**

The EnvSec consultations in Skopje identified hazardous activities, including mining operations and industrial activities, as posing potential risks to the transboundary character of the region. Within this field, EnvSec partners are focusing on programmes and projects contributing to the management of such transboundary risks, by providing in-depth risk assessments for decision makers, identifying potential hot spots and recommending priority measures of mitigation and risk management at national and regional levels. Moreover, in the later phases, EnvSec partners will monitor the implementation of chosen options, carry out capacity building activities and perform final evaluations.

EnvSec partners, in cooperation with local partners, are also proposing and implementing possible pilot projects on transboundary risk management in

order to demonstrate best practices, as well as the feasibility of achieving concrete results of risk reduction with limited resources.

Furthermore, action aimed at improved transboundary cooperation in the field of monitoring, access to environmental information and emergency preparedness will be undertaken, contributing to participation of local stakeholders and fostering stability and sustainable development in the region.

The initiative currently includes the following ongoing projects in this field of action:

- Reducing Environment and Security Risks from Mining in SEE;
- Feasibility Study for Lojane Mine; and
- Cross-Border Environmental Monitoring and Early Warning Systems.

### **Management of Transboundary Natural Resources**

The management of transboundary natural resources was identified as a second field of action during the EnvSec Consultations in Skopje, due to a lack of or poor regional cooperation resulting from the different, often conflicting, environmental and natural resource management goals in each country. One of the real challenges will be to improve the transboundary management of natural resources by improving transboundary and regional cooperation.

EnvSec partners will focus their activities on providing assessments and overviews of the state of environment of major transboundary natural resources, such as river basins, as well as identifying the transboundary hot spots of resources requiring improved management and transboundary coordination. Moreover, recommendations for meeting short- and long-term community needs regarding land and water resources of selected natural resources will be proposed.

Through EnvSec partners will support the strengthening of regional cooperation in water resource management by identifying the role and fostering the capacity of local actors. Through specially designed workshops, special attention is given to the protected mountainous areas in SEE, and the main role of the EnvSec partners will be to support the establishment of a regional mountain network and cooperation with other mountain networks.

Ongoing projects include:

- Reversal of Land and Water Degradation in the Tisza Basin Ecosystem: Establishment of Mechanisms for Land and Water Management;
- Network Development of Local Actors from the Sava River Basin on Water Resource Management;

- Enhancing Transboundary Biodiversity Management in South Eastern Europe;
- Enhancing Transboundary Cooperation in the Prespa Park Region; and
- Sustainable Management of the International Waters – Prespa Lake.

### Cross-Cutting Issues

The two previously described fields of action will be complemented by activities on awareness raising among local populations, access to information, helping to further enhance the transparency of local institutions and organisations, and capacity building among local actors. EnvSec partners propose, as a part of cross-cutting issues, to develop a regional postgraduate course, which will give an overview and inter-link the topics related to environment, security and diplomacy.

The EnvSec Initiative was presented at and welcomed by the Seventh REReP Task Force meeting held in September 2004 in Belgrade. The final output will be presented at the Environment for Europe ministerial conference that will take place in Belgrade in 2007.

Fruitful cooperation with the REC as the REReP Secretariat is ongoing, and possible substantive association of the REC with the EnvSec Initiative is under consideration.

### Network Development of Local Actors from the Sava River Basin on Water Resource Management (OSCE)/EnvSec Initiative in SEE

**Donor:** Canada/Belgium

**Amount:** EUR 173,617

**Duration:** September 2004 – December 31, 2005

**Beneficiary countries:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia

### Project Background

The objectives of this joint UNITAR/OSCE project are:

- to establish networks among local actors from the Sava River basin to promote information exchange and collaboration;
- to promote regional cooperation by improving the management of the Sava River basin and thereby improving its water quality; and
- to encourage overall public participation in the decision-making process.

The project is creating a network of local actors concerned about water resource management (municipalities, NGOs, associations, water services companies, etc.) through national workshop sessions where representa-

tives of stakeholders from each municipality will discuss common problems and possibilities for collaboration.

After one workshop has been completed in each country, a regional workshop will be organised to put together an action plan for each country and discuss the possibilities for collaboration. With the conclusion of the second workshop – scheduled for late spring 2005 – the network created will have a website to facilitate contact between stakeholders and to inform the public about the initiative.

### Achievements and Progress

After the completion of the first national workshop in Brcko (Bosnia and Herzegovina) in October 2004, which featured the participation of 45 representatives from water suppliers, NGOs, and local/regional/national authorities, participants drafted short-term national working plans.

The action plans were based on the self-assessment matrix and river diagrams prepared by the participants in three different working groups corresponding to the Vrbas, Bosna, and Drina river sub-basins.

Once the assessment was presented by the group, participants located other municipalities/cantons that were used as examples of best practices to solve the main problems identified: thus, action plans were prepared via pairing municipalities and cantons.

As a side activity offered by UNITAR, 20 participants joined the distance learning course leading up to a diploma in International Environmental Law issued by UNITAR.

### What Comes Next

The second and third national workshops are scheduled for early summer 2005 the second to be held in Croatia, and the third in Serbia and Montenegro. They will be followed by a regional workshop, and a results meeting will be held in autumn 2005 in Vienna.

### Enhancing Transboundary Cooperation in the PRESIPA Region (UNDP)/EnvSec Initiative in SEE

**Donor:** UNDP Regional Programme

**Amount:** USD 220,000

**Duration:** February 2005 – June 2006

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

### Project Background

The project will be implemented under the framework of the UNDP-GEF co-financed project Integrated Ecosystem Management in the Trans-boundary Prespa Park Region. By working cooperatively with farmers



on both sides of the lake, the project will minimise the impact of intensive agricultural production on the biodiversity, ecosystem functions and water quality in the Prespa Region.

UNDP will work with local communities and farmers groups to build agricultural extension services that will promote rational water and chemical input use and strengthen existing agricultural associations.

### Achievements and Progress

The Prespa Park region is situated in the Balkan Peninsula and encompasses parts of Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece. The area is a high altitude basin that includes the interlinked Macro Prespa and Micro Prespa Lakes, as well as their surrounding mountains. It is considered to be an ecosystem of global significance and has been identified as one of Europe's 24 major transboundary "ecological bricks." The entire Prespa region hosts unique biotopes that are important from both a European and a global conservation perspective. In addition, the lake region is considered to be of great cultural and historical importance.

The unique values of this ecosystem, however, are being progressively eroded because of either changes in or intensification of specific human activities, including unsustainable patterns of exploitation of natural resources and inappropriate land-use practices that result in progressive soil and water contamination, loss of forest cover, erosion and wildlife loss. The area is severely economically depressed, and roughly 80 percent of the population on both sides of the lake are involved in agricultural production. Water use for irrigation, and pesticide and fertiliser application (estimated to be up to five times higher than required levels) are having disastrous effects on the region.

The project will try to achieve the following:

- capacity building in farmer association planning, outreach and advocacy;
- assessment of impacts of agrochemical use in the area;
- assessment of impacts on current water use practices in the area;
- establishment of an advisory group on agrochemicals and on irrigation/water use;
- training on monitoring fertiliser inputs and on appropriate application of pesticides; and
- demonstration training on optimal approaches to drip feed irrigation and on monitoring water inputs.

### What Comes Next

Project deliverables will include:

- assessment of impacts on agrochemical use in the area;

- assessment of impacts on current water use practices in the area;
- training on monitoring of fertiliser inputs and on appropriate application of pesticides; and
- demonstration training on optimal approaches to drip feed irrigation and on monitoring water inputs.

### Reversal of Land and Water Degradation in the Tisza Basin Ecosystem: Establishment of Mechanisms for Land and Water Management (UNDP)/EnvSec Initiative in SEE

**Donor:** UNDP Regional Programme and UNDP/GEF, **Amount:** Regional Programme – USD 200,000; UNDP/GEF – USD 1 million (medium-sized project)

**Duration:** February 2005 – January 31, 2006

**Beneficiary countries:** Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Ukraine

### Project Background

The goal of this project is to ensure that the land and water resources of the Tisza River basin meet the long and short-term requirements of the communities in the region. The project will build on what has already been achieved through the EU accession process and the EU and GEF support of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) in implementation of the Water Framework Directive, and on the UNDP sustainable development initiatives in the basin. The project will bring together and find common ground for major initiatives in the river basin, working closely with the ICPDR.

### Achievements and Progress

The Tisza River system is an internationally significant river system that has seriously degraded and continues to be threatened. Integrated, multi-country, transboundary responses are necessary to address the threats to the river system and to address the underlying causes.

The Tisza River Basin is the largest catchment area of the Danube River. The river drains from the Carpathian Mountains into a 157,200 square-kilometre area, and is home to some 14 million people. It begins in the territories of Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine as a number of smaller tributaries fed by mountain streams. It flows into the Pannonian flood plain of eastern Hungary and then south into Serbia and Montenegro where it joins the Danube. This river is the main water source for Hungary, a significant source for Serbia and Montenegro and significant for upstream countries Romania, western Ukraine and south eastern Slovakia.



In 2000 the Tisza drew international alarm due a cyanide spill from the Romanian mine tailings dam in Baia Mare during seasonal flooding. In the spill, 100,000 tonnes of cyanide-laden sludge spilled into the Tisza, leaving almost 1,000 kilometres of the river lifeless killing fish, invertebrates and birds.

Though significant international attention has been paid to the region in terms of studying the effects of the spill, each country tends to focus primarily on the waters only within its own borders without fully recognising the impacts of its actions on neighbouring countries. This lack of coordination diminishes the success of other national and local level projects because it creates separate standards within each state for monitoring success and managing crises.

Although each of the Tisza riparian countries has committed to implementing the EU Water Framework Directive (EU WFD), the capacity of each country to effectively meet the WFD requirements varies widely.

The project will try to achieve the following:

- a detailed basin stakeholder analysis to identify the stakeholders and articulate their concerns;
- establishment of stakeholder groups at regional, national and (where appropriate) local levels;
- establishment of inter-ministry committees (including finance) to direct the planning process;
- synthesis of available data and information on transboundary issues in a transboundary diagnostic analysis (TDA)<sup>2</sup>;
- identification of priority transboundary issues and drafting of a long-term vision for the basin;
- development and endorsement of national action plans to address priority issues (with attached budgets);
- development of regional endorsement for a strategic action plan for the basin;
- development of transboundary demonstration project concepts and plans; and
- implementation of small-scale pilot project to demonstrate the advantages of integrated river basin management (IRBM).

### What Comes Next

The expected project deliverables include:

- detailed basin stakeholder analysis.
- development of a TDA;
- identification of priority transboundary issues;
- development of a regional endorsement for a strategic action plan for the basin;
- reports from the national and regional workshops;

- development of transboundary demonstration project concepts and plans;
- implementation of small-scale pilot project to demonstrate advantages of IRBM; and
- full-sized project document.

## Enhancing Transboundary Biodiversity Management in South Eastern Europe (UNEP)/EnvSec Initiative in SEE

**Amount:** USD 230,000

**Duration:** January – December 2005 (phase I); January 2006 – September 2007 (phase II)

**Beneficiary countries/territories:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration)

### Project Background

This project was designed to encourage regional cooperation on the development of integrated management plans for transboundary protected mountainous areas, as well as the development of a network of protected mountainous areas in South Eastern Europe.

The countries proposed for this project have been directly or indirectly involved in the ethnic conflicts that have escalated for more than a decade in the Balkan region. These war-torn nations, where ethnic tensions still exist, have also been subject to the economic crises as a result of their isolation from the global economy and the impacts of the transition from socialist economic policies to free market economic policies.

Uncontrolled industrial and economic activities such as agriculture, building, hunting, overgrazing, deforestation (illegal logging) and the collection of medicinal plants have been causing negative environmental impacts in the region. In consultations with regional authorities, the issue of biodiversity loss was recognised as posing a security risk to the region, whereas good technical cooperation in this field could also contribute to regional stability and prosperity.

### Achievements and Progress

This project's objectives are:

- to carry out an assessment of the state of transboundary mountain ecosystems, main threats and current management practices;
- to support ongoing initiatives of transboundary cooperation on biodiversity and protected areas management, and facilitate collaborative and consultative processes (e.g. Peace Park); and
- to support the establishment of networks of pro-

tected areas and build capacity on selected topics at the sub-regional level.

Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro share important natural resources, including the transboundary mountain ecosystems of the Balkans. The regions in focus are as follows:

Sharr/Sara Mountain National Park – the only declared national park in Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration) – which borders the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, has important plant and animal biodiversity (lynx, bear, eagle and griffon vulture) and is considered a centre of Balkan endemic biodiversity.

The Bjeshket e Nemuna/Prokletije/Cursed Mountains border Albania, and Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration). This region is in the process of being declared a national park. It is highly representative of European flora and fauna, and the attempts to establish an international transboundary Peace Park are ongoing.

Korab Massif is the main segment of Mavrovo national park. It lies in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the border with Albania.

In the course of project development on inclusion of existing and/or proposed protected areas, the following mountain regions could be considered:

- Osogovo, Ograzden, Malesevo and Belasica mountains on the border of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria.
- Rodopi Massif situated along the junction between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria and Greece;
- Kozhuf and the Nidzhe Mountains situated in former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and demarcating its border with Greece;
- West Stara Planina (West Balkan) mountains situated on the border between Bulgaria and Serbia and Montenegro;
- Dinara-Livanjsko Polje karst ecosystem, underground water system and high mountains (bordering Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia).
- Durmitor-Tara high mountain and river system shared by Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro;
- Tara-Drina-Javor, mountains forests between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro; and
- Orjen-Snjeznica mosaic of mountains, waters and cultural landscape, shared by three countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro.

In some countries fragmented or no legislation exists for protected areas. Problems are aggravated by the fact that several separate institutions are responsi-

ble for protected area management in each of the countries, and therefore management is disjointed. Most countries lack integrated management plans and, especially in the transboundary protected areas, due to the past conflicts in the region, there is sometimes a complete lack of cooperation within a protected area (e.g. Sharr/Sara National Park) or across borders with other protected areas, making it impossible to address threats in a coordinated manner.

An apolitical facilitation process would encourage the establishment of a network of protected mountainous areas and a transboundary Peace Park(s), and would focus on capacity building on environmental and biodiversity issues, particularly of transboundary nature, to promote ecosystem level management. This in turn would foster a better understanding between the countries of the region and reduce security tensions by involving stakeholders of all ethnic backgrounds in the development of protected area management plans, as well as in the management of the protected areas themselves.

### What Comes Next

An assessment of the state of transboundary ecosystems will be carried out during the first phase (2005) of the projects, and the first regional workshop will be prepared and organised. This phase will be finalised by delivering a report on the first phase. During the second phase, building a regional network of mountain protected areas is planned, as well as two workshops (2006, 2007) on a regional level. This phase will be finished by publishing a report on the second phase.

There are clear indications that capacity building remains a need in the region and this problem can be overcome by organising working groups in cooperation with other mountain networks, such as Alpine and Carpathian ones.

### Environment and Security Risks from Mining in South Eastern Europe (UNEP)/EnvSec Initiative in SEE

**Amount:** USD 300,000

**Duration:** June 2004 – April 2005 (first phase); April 2005 – September 2007 (second phase)

**Beneficiary countries/territories:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration), Ukraine

### Project Background

The region already has a history of serious mining accidents, due in part to the widespread neglect of envi-

ronmental safety and human security issues at existing sites resulting from the past change in economic and political circumstances in the subject countries. The dramatic pollution of the Tisza and Danube rivers by a small mine in Romania in 2000 had a major impact on the entire region, which clearly illustrates the potential impact of even relatively small operations that are not properly managed to contain impacts on-site.

There are also numerous abandoned sites in the region, which are gradually deteriorating with a commensurate increase in risks to both local communities and international relations. Finally, the use of potentially hazardous chemicals in mining, such as cyanide, poses additional risks in communities when transport and storage accidents occur. In addition to causing widespread environmental pollution, much of it transboundary, as well as heightened tension between the nations, all of these hazards confront local communities with immediate, dramatic risks and/or health damage from chemical contamination of their neighbourhoods.

Risk identification and assessment, cooperative development of policy and technical options suitable for the region, choosing carefully demonstrations or pilot activities, and capacity building are main objectives of this project. The basis for a longer-term action should be settled at the national level, reinforced by further capacity building, and concrete action should be taken to reduce risks and create community emergency preparedness systems around mining operations.

### Achievements and Progress

During the first phase of the project, the Desk Assessment was developed to identify, delineate and catalogue sites related to mineral resources that pose substantial risk to the environment, public health and safety, and to regional socio-political stability in South Eastern Europe. It would also provide information required to support work on reducing transboundary risk and hazards.

Currently, the project is entering the second phase, which will work toward implementation of the most promising options through demonstrations at selected sites, and through the evaluation and testing of possible policy changes and transboundary cooperation mechanisms. At the same time some first actions to build national and local capacities in hazard identification and risk reduction will be proposed.

The project intends to accomplish the following tasks:

- publication and launch of *EnvSec Environment and Security Risks from Mining in South Eastern Europe* (May 2005);
- annual EnvSec consultations on mining (2005-2007);
- three sub-regional workshops on training;

- *Good Practices* guide on tools for early warning and conflict resolution;
- Balkans mining monitor website and semi-annual newsletter;
- input to Belgrade Environment for Europe conference in 2007; and
- specific targeted action plans/negotiation proposals.

### What Comes Next

During the second phase, the project will focus on the priorities agreed upon in the first phase at the macro-level (sub-regional) with the main aim to:

- further catalyse activities related to EnvSec and mining (both focusing on legacies and future new development) in the region through meetings, consultations and training of mining regulators;
- develop and propagate tools for early warning and conflict resolution (related to both past and future risks from mining);
- monitor the status and progress of EnvSec's activities in the region;
- communicate both externally (publications, launches, etc.) but also internally (focal points) findings and progress of EnvSec and related activities; and
- prepare input to the Environment for Europe conference in 2007.

For local clean-up or capacity-building, it is envisaged that separate project fiches will be developed, such as the one for the Lojane mine in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

### Sustainable Management of International Waters: Prespa Lake (NATO)/EnvSec Initiative in SEE

**Amount:** Estimated total EUR 200,000

**Duration:** 2005-2008

**Beneficiary countries:** Albania, Greece, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom

### Project Background

The two Prespa lakes touch three different countries (Albania, Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). At present each country acts independently as far as water use is concerned, and there is little organised data on water input or output, including water used for human needs. The level of Macro Prespa Lake has declined significantly over recent years (7-8 meters) and so an understanding of why this has happened and what factors are influencing this trend will

be important for future water use strategies, and for developing more sustainable approaches to water use around the lake.

It will also be of importance for the management of water resources in Lake Ohrid which derives a large proportion of its water from the two Prespa lakes. The project output will directly link to activities currently being developed by both the German Bank for Reconstruction KfW (through its consulting company, GFA) and UNDP (with funding from the Global Environment Facility). These projects focus on water issues from a transboundary natural resources management, policy and institutional strengthening perspective.

Project objectives are:

- to understand the mechanisms behind natural cyclical changes in the level of the Prespa lakes, and determine the influence of anthropogenic factors on these cycles;
- to develop a preliminary water balance model for Prespa;
- to understand changes in the water balance related to climate changes; and
- to describe the hydrogeological connection between the lake and the aquifer.

### Achievements and Progress

The project's first preparatory meeting was held in Resen, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on March 4-5 to discuss options for activities that would allow the main objectives to be met within the scope of the budget approved by NATO. The meeting was attended by the project directors and co-directors from each country. The main output of the meeting, a revised workplan, has been submitted to NATO for approval. If approved, planning and field-work will start in May.

The project activities and outcomes will need to be linked closely with the activities currently being planned by both the UNDP-GEF and the GFA-KfW project teams. Meetings have been held with UNDP representatives and representatives of GFA, the consulting company working for KfW on the Prespa Lake Project, to discuss opportunities for taking in of the results of the NATO project and areas for future collaboration. UNDP will include a proposal for funding to provide an international consultant to assist with the taking in of the results from the NATO project when they submit the final version of the project brief to the GEF this June. Discussions are also continuing with the GFA team leader on how best to integrate NATO project data-gathering activities with proposals for activities that will be submitted for consideration by KfW in June.

### What Comes Next

It is envisaged that co-funding from KfW-GFA and UNDP-GEF will be used to support activities taking place under the NATO project.

The next step is to finalise the revised work plan taking into account the views already expressed by the project participants at the workshop in Resen and the discussions held with UNDP and KfW (GFA). The key project outcomes will include:

- purchase and installation of equipment (such as an automatic meteorological station, water level recorder, equipment for the tracer injection experiment);
- training of young scientists;
- interpretation of satellite images;
- simulation and modelling of outflow;
- preliminary water budget model made available;
- monitoring report of meteorological data and tracer sampling data; and
- linking project outcomes with development strategies in the Prespa basin.

### Summer Course on Environment, Security and Diplomacy (OSCE)/EnvSec Initiative in SEE

**Amount:** USD 15,000

**Duration:** January 2005 – December 2006

**Beneficiary countries/territories:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration)

### Project Background

The main objective of this project is to conduct a feasibility study to assess the viability of organising a Summer Course on Environment, Security and Diplomacy for South Eastern Europe Countries

### Achievements and Progress

The course could comprise the following modules:

#### *Environmental Diplomacy*

- Policies and politics, tools and mechanisms for conflicts of early warning and prevention.

#### *Environmental Risks and Cooperation Opportunities*

- Natural resources management as a tool for conflict prevention and as a cause of political instability;

- Hazardous activities: management and adoption of cleaner production and technology.

### *Transboundary Environmental Cooperation*

- Understanding of environmental multilateral agreements, including water, natural protected areas, pollution prevention, etc.

### *Environmental Crisis Management and Remediation*

- Hazardous substances, including chemical and biological threats (rescue coordination response, chemical accidents response, protection against adverse effects of toxic hazards);
- Natural disasters, including floods, fires, integrated risk management system, crisis management, conflict resolution, remediation, recovery and reconstruction.

### **What Comes Next**

A feasibility study will comprise:

- a review of the current courses on environment, security and diplomacy in the project countries;
- potential university partners;
- a definition of the target group – beneficiaries;
- a draft programme and course content; and the budget.

## **Conservation without Frontiers: Networking for Sustainability in South Eastern Europe**

### **Rationale and principles for IUCN involvement in South Eastern Europe**

The IUCN European Programme provides a policy platform function in Western Europe and the EU, whereas its main geographic focus for project activities is in Central and South Eastern Europe and the CIS, with a special focus on “double deficit” countries<sup>3</sup> with low economic development and low environmental standards. South Eastern Europe<sup>4</sup> in particular, with its high nature value areas, is a core region for IUCN. Recognising the often excellent scientific knowledge and expertise in the region, and the need to involve civil society in environmental decision making, IUCN aims to increase its membership and expert base in this region to Western European (EU) levels over the coming years.

Based on consultations with IUCN members in the region, two initial key themes for action were identified:

- transboundary protected areas; and
- raising the profile of biodiversity conservation in the region on the regional and international policy agenda.

The central objectives of IUCN activities in South-Eastern Europe are to:

- improve the network of protected areas in the region and expand coverage of protected areas in relation to global coverage;
- improve the effectiveness of management of protected areas;
- improve the information flow on biodiversity projects and between key stakeholders;
- encourage and support implementation of the Aarhus Convention; and
- create joint regional understanding and cooperation between IUCN members to ensure the conservation of natural and cultural heritage and to foster a better image of the region.

### **Activities**

The activities outlined were made possible through financial contributions from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Management and Fisheries (DGCS); the Netherlands Ministry for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV); the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and the German Center International Migration (CIM). Partners for implementation of the programmes and initiatives mentioned in this report are UNESCO, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the REC.

### *IUCN Members Meeting 2004 and Establishment of the Programme Office for SEE*

During a regional members meeting held in Novi Sad, Serbia and Montenegro in March 2004, representatives of both non-government and government members reported on problems and success stories from their countries. Problems identified as being common to the region were included in the IUCN strategy. These are, basically: a lack of a clearing-house mechanism on biodiversity-related projects and actors in the region (including an overview of the state of implementation of the Aarhus Convention); a lack of protected area coverage in relation to global coverage; a lack of management of quality/national ecological networks; non-objective EIAs (financed or even carried out by construction companies, no objective assessment possible); illegal, unregulated and unsustainable use of natural resources; a lack of transparency and access to scientific data; non-participatory/insufficient development and implementation of legislation; and, finally, a lack of media relations and press coverage for environmental issues.



Based on this feedback and endorsed by its members, IUCN established its IUCN Programme Office for South Eastern Europe (IUCN-SEE) last June in Belgrade – functioning as a field office for the Regional Office for Europe (ROfE). Covering Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, UNMIK-Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as well as Albania, Bulgaria and Romania, the office serves a group of almost 20 members in the region (with access to 10 additional members in the neighbouring countries of Hungary, Greece and Turkey) representing governmental bodies as well as civil society (NGOs). Additional partners could be attracted to potential IUCN-membership (process under evaluation or approval) already, which reflects the existing demand for IUCN's presence in the region. The office intends to overcome the ecological aftermath of the disintegration of former Republic of Yugoslavia by functioning as a hub for information regarding the transboundary management of protected areas and biodiversity conservation, based on the strategic plan entitled, Conservation without Frontiers – Toward a New Image for the Balkans, a strategy directly serving REReP.

### **Joint UNESCO/IUCN/SDC workshop on transboundary cooperation**

The workshop MAB and Biosphere Reserves and Transboundary Cooperation in the SEE Region (June, 2004) was convened jointly by UNESCO, IUCN and SDC, in Belgrade and Tara National Park, with support from the Serbian Institute for Nature Conservation. The organisers intended to provide a platform for debating the most relevant issues related to protected areas within the specific geographical context of the South Eastern European countries, focusing on transboundary cooperation.

A proactive working-group approach was adopted with a wide range of participants representing various institutions (international organisations, ministries, NGOs) to specifically identify key issues emerging from the recent Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme assessment in SEE as a possible framework for facilitating transboundary cooperation; to identify key actors and determine the future involvement of IUCN; to design more effective ways of interaction among major stakeholders (institutional and non-institutional) in the management of biosphere reserves and protected areas; and to identify innovative practices to be implemented at the biosphere reserve level; and to reconcile biodiversity conservation and local economic development.

Several common themes emerged from this workshop. Firstly, the need to better harmonise actions at the three major scales of intervention (international, national and local). Secondly, the borders of the traditional mono-focused interventions (natural, cultural,

social, etc.) must be crossed more frequently, as cultural and biological diversity can only be protected if local stakeholders, as well as the relevant political actors, are properly involved. Thirdly, joint initiatives should be promoted, especially through the synergy of several large international organisations working together in the region. Finally, IUCN was given a mandate by the co-organisers and participants in the workshop to act as the hub for biodiversity-related information in the region, and to continue to extending the activities of the new office for South Eastern Europe in Belgrade.

### *European Green Belt*

The Iron Curtain running from the Barents Sea to the Bosphorus divided Europe for almost 40 years. This division was expressed most strongly in Germany, where a barrier spanning 1,400 kilometres divided the country and the people. This barrier created a “forbidden zone” inside which no activity was allowed. Elsewhere, landscapes were being shaped and modified by intensive agricultural and development processes, but habitats within the forbidden zone were left untouched for 30 years.

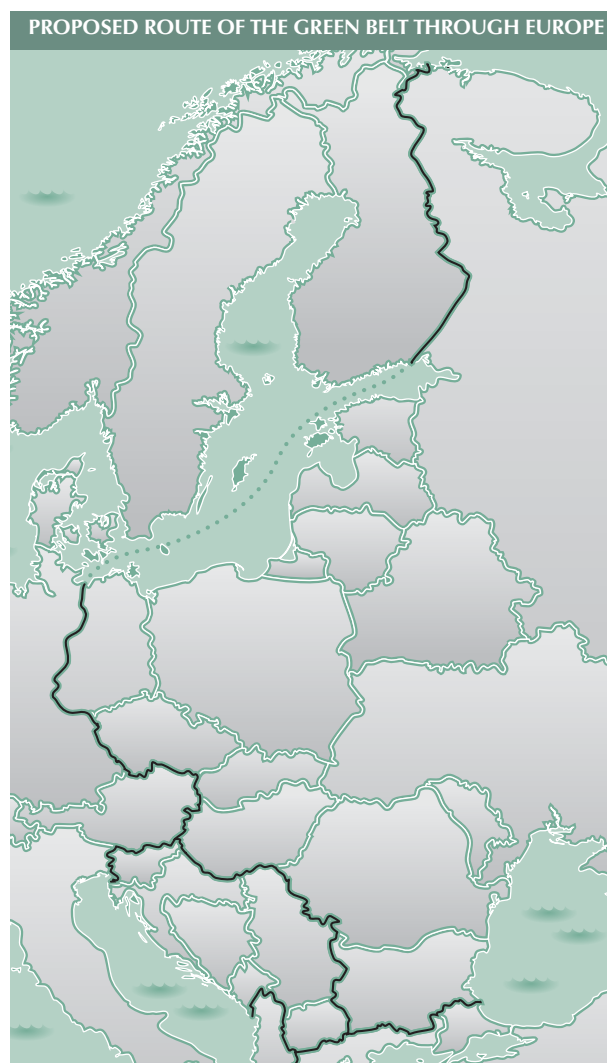
A large part of the proposed Green Belt will be in the countries of the Stability Pact, which requires regional and bilateral cross-border cooperation in order to connect this ecological network through the backbone of Europe. An expert working group from the 22 countries involved along the European Green Belt launched the initiative in September in Hungary, where the Iron Curtain was torn down 15 years ago.

IUCN ROfE, which acts as secretariat for the initiative, has asked the environment ministers in the countries of South Eastern Europe to nominate a focal point from their country. IUCN ROfE is providing a Green Belt coordinator to analyse the ecological and socio-economic benefits to the people living in and around the proposed Green Belt areas. These benefits include:

- increased development through the provision of funding at European and local levels;
- provision of ecosystem services, such as nutrient cycling and water-level regulation, which would be very difficult and costly to reinstate if degraded or artificially replaced;
- increased income to these regions through the development of sustainable tourism, which would stimulate support services and also provide an additional market for local products; and
- a strong planning instrument to steer inter-regional and cross-border infrastructure development projects.

Visit [www.greenbelteurope.net](http://www.greenbelteurope.net) for more information.





### *Biodiversity Service*

The Biodiversity Service, established in 2000 as a consortium of UNEP, IUCN, European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC) and the REC, is committed to providing client-driven assistance to help countries implement their national biodiversity strategies and action plans and, more recently, the targets of the 2003 Kiev Resolution on Biodiversity, in which European ministers of environment signed the ambitious commitment to halt the loss of biodiversity in Europe at all levels by 2010. The Biodiversity Service has developed several tools and carried out activities of relevance to the countries of the Stability Pact.

### *Study on Biodiversity Needs in the Region*

Commissioned by UNEP and carried out by IUCN ROfE in March 2004, this four-country study analysed the status of the Kiev target implementation, obstacles

to the achievement of the targets, country-specific assistance requirements for achieving the targets and, specifically, how the Biodiversity Service can assist these countries over the coming, critically important years.

The countries surveyed included Poland, Serbia and Montenegro, Georgia and Kazakhstan. They were selected on the basis of their representation in the Biodiversity Service's geographical area of concern, namely Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The study was based upon a review of pertinent documentation and personal interviews with key representatives of government and non-governmental organisations who had knowledge of the Kiev Resolution on Biodiversity and ongoing initiatives to meet the resolution's stated targets. For the Serbian case study, in-depth analyses were carried out for the following thematic areas: forestry, agriculture, ecological networks, invasive alien species, financing biodiversity, public participation and awareness, and biodiversity monitoring.

### *Biodiversity Service and Expert Roster*

In order to be able to respond quickly to requests from users of the service (e.g. for the support of National Biodiversity and Action Plans), IUCN has agreed to identify available expertise. Based on a memorandum of understanding with UNEP, IUCN has compiled a database of approximately 70 biodiversity experts in various areas such as environmental law and capacity building. The database has been managed and updated by UNEP ROfE since December 2003.

### *IUCN E-Bulletin for Biodiversity: toward a Clearing House Mechanism for SEE*

Upon request by the participants of the UNESCO/IUCN/SDC workshop on transboundary cooperation, IUCN established the IUCN South Eastern European E-Bulletin in June 2004, which provides a quarterly update on news, events, projects, organisations, publications and funding opportunities. The bulletin is distributed electronically in English and represents a first step towards IUCN's goal of improving information flow and generating greater synergy between different national and international actors and donors active in the region, and to raise the importance of biodiversity on the political agenda.

### *Countdown 2010 Initiative*

The goal of halting biodiversity loss by 2010 is the subject of several key international agreements, including the EU Sustainable Development Strategy signed by the EU heads of state. Each recognises the rapid degradation of ecosystems and habitats, the increasing threat to many species populations, and the urgent need to take action that will halt the decline in irreplaceable natural resources. However, a gap remains between

these commitments and actions undertaken to implement them. IUCN and its 357 European members and other partners commenced the Countdown 2010 initiative to reach five objectives and thus facilitate progress towards achieving the 2010 target by:

- focusing public and stakeholder attention on the 2010 biodiversity targets to keep biodiversity on the political agenda;
- mobilising all stakeholders to contribute to achieving the 2010 biodiversity targets;
- catalysing and facilitating collective action for implementation; and
- amplifying the activities of IUCN members and other organisations by relating working programmes to the 2010 biodiversity targets.

The Countdown 2010 initiative will implement a number of concrete activities to involve decision makers and stakeholders in the debate and stimulate action to reach the 2010 target. IUCN activities in South Eastern Europe are an integral part of the Countdown 2010. More information is available at [www.countdown2010.net](http://www.countdown2010.net)

### *IUCN Project Portfolio 2005 and Cooperation with the REC*

IUCN-SEE served the implementation of REReP within the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe by harmonising its activities with the REC, which functions as REReP Secretariat. During the REReP Task Force Meeting in Belgrade in September 2004, IUCN provided an updated activity report and introduced the Green Belt and Countdown 2010 initiatives to a broader international audience. Based on this event, the Norwegian government stimulated additional cooperation between the REC and IUCN as two of the major players regarding environmental programmes and approved corresponding projects. Other organisations such as the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) requested additional detailed information from IUCN-SEE in order to evaluate options for project funding.

Based on requests from different sides, such as the minister for tourism from Montenegro, the IUCN-SEE Programme Office got involved in the public debate about the Buk Bijela Dam construction plans in Republika Srpska (BiH) affecting the Tara Canyon in Mon-

tenegro, and assisted IUCN-HQs in running a project evaluation mission (in cooperation with UNESCO), in order to lay the scientific grounds for further discussion of this environmental hot spot. The mission took place in early 2005 and was attended by the newly elected IUCN councillor for South Eastern Europe. It also holds observer status regarding implementation of the European Water Framework Directive. By transferring lessons learned from advanced countries (such as Slovenia) to less developed ones (such as Serbia and Montenegro), IUCN facilitates the process of harmonisation within the region.

In the framework of the Sava River Floodplain Biodiversity Conservation Project (under submission at LIFE 3rd Countries), IUCN-SEE launched a plan aimed at establishing an ecological network along the whole river system over four countries to conserve biodiversity in line with the Countdown 2010 initiative. Upon request of the competent authorities, IUCN-SEE also started to engage in freshwater management projects at the borders of Albania and its neighbouring countries regarding coastal lagoons and wetlands along the European Green Belt Initiative (request for developing projects from the Environmental Ministry in Albania) as well as working on capacity building for the Ministry of Environment and related bodies in Albania. Under the leadership of FAO-Serbia, IUCN is involved in the concept of rural development/sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation in the Stara Planina area, which is harmonised with ongoing activities of the REC in that region.

Extending IUCN's ongoing involvement into a broader range of activities will increase its recognition as a powerful and qualified partner for strategic partnerships serving the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe.

## Endnotes

- 1 German Bank for Reconstruction
- 2 Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis: a science-based analysis, which (1) identifies, quantifies and sets priorities for environmental concerns; and (2) identifies immediate, intermediate and fundamental causes of environmental degradation.
- 3 Based on the Well Being Index (Prescott-Allen 2001: The Well Being of Nations); cf. "European Challenges for Biodiversity," IUCN Regional Office for Europe, 2003. Funding priority will be given to work that benefits the double-deficit countries, because this will serve both people and conservation most effectively.
- 4 The new IUCN Programme Office for South Eastern Europe is not exclusively focusing on the countries of the Stability Pact, but aims to set its work in a regional context, including cooperation with Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Turkey.

### IUCN E-BULLETIN

The IUCN South Eastern European E-Bulletin is available online at: [www.iucneurope.org](http://www.iucneurope.org).

For e-mail subscriptions, please contact

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### **THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (REC)**

is a non-partisan, non-advocacy, not-for-profit international organisation with a mission to assist in solving environmental problems in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The REC fulfils this mission by promoting cooperation among non-governmental organisations, governments, businesses and other environmental stakeholders, and by supporting the free exchange of information and public participation in environmental decision making.

The REC was established in 1990 by the United States, the European Commission and Hungary. Today, the REC is legally based on a charter signed by the governments of 28 countries and the European Commission, and on an international agreement with the government of Hungary. The REC has its head office in Szentendre, Hungary, and country offices and field offices in 16 beneficiary countries which are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey.

Recent donors are the European Commission and the governments of Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as other inter-governmental and private institutions.



## **Environmental Reconstruction and EU Approximation in South Eastern Europe**

REReP Highlights 2003-2005